



THE CUP FINAL A great day for Italy

Sport p30



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the eye



Blair offers a fresh start for Irish peace

David McKittrick
Ireland correspondent

In Belfast yesterday Tony Blair moved to break the logjam in the Northern Ireland peace process by announcing the re-opening of direct contacts between the Government and Sinn Féin. As part of a significant new initiative to explore the chances of restoring the IRA's ceasefire, the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, has written directly to Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams.

Mr Blair made the announcement in the course of a speech mapping out Labour's vision for the future of Northern Ireland. He stressed the union with Britain was here to stay but also indicated his desire for a strong Irish dimension, with increased linkages with Dublin. He pulled off the unusual feat of drawing welcomes for his speech from both Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble and SDLP leader John Hume. Since the aims of these two parties are generally held to be inimical, it may take some time to clarify whether one or both have misinterpreted Mr Blair's intentions.

Initial response from Sinn Féin was critical. Martin McGuinness complaining that nationalists "will be disappointed by the pro-Unionist emphasis in Mr Blair's speech." Nevertheless, Sinn Féin, having for months called for direct talks with the Government, could hardly have turned down the initiative and last night Mr McGuinness confirmed Sinn Féin would be taking up the offer of talks. Telephone contact between the two sides is expected as early as today.

It emerged last night that one of the reasons for the unusually widespread welcome given to the speech was a detailed consultation which took place earlier this week. Mr Blair is understood to have spoken to John Major, while Ms Mowlam spoke to her predecessor, Sir Patrick Mayhew. Mr Trimble, Mr Hume and others were also consulted.

Mr Blair told his audience at the Royal Ulster Agricultural Show: "My message to Sinn

Fein is clear. The settlement train is leaving. I want you on that train. But it is leaving anyway and I will not allow it to wait for you." In the key passage of his speech, the Prime Minister declared: "To make sure there is no danger of misunderstanding, I am prepared to allow officials to meet Sinn Féin, provided events on the ground, here and elsewhere, do not make that impossible. This is not about negotiating the terms of a ceasefire. We simply want to explain our position and to assess whether the republican

New embrace for a land in exile

When the rest of the United Kingdom was coming to terms with new Labour's election landslide, Northern Ireland seemed, as usual, outside the event. In Britain, we cheered or mourned. The province merely watched. Its bitter history of sectarianism and violence, producing different parties and provoking direct rule, has ended it from mainstream politics - Britain's neglected half-sister.

John Major tried to make amends, expending a lot of personal attention and hard work in the early stages of the peace process. But by the end of his government, his exhaustion and weakness meant that Downing Street had become part of the problem. Major simply wasn't strong enough to give Northern Ireland the attention it needed.

Now Tony Blair is, in effect, offering to use the optimism and momentum generated by his victory to unblock the peace process and start again. The vigour which has been coursing through Whitehall this past fortnight is on offer for Northern Ireland too.

It is an unexpected gift. Can the new start for British politics be a new start for the politics of Irish peace? Certainly, Blair is using his personal authority to crack whips and

movement genuinely is ready to give up violence and commit itself to politics alone. If they are, I will not be slow in my response. If they are not, they can expect no sympathy or understanding. I will be implacable in pursuit of terrorism."

In other words, Mr Blair has given republicans a further and possibly final chance to renew the IRA ceasefire and opt for politics rather than violence. In doing so he refrained from making a number of stipulations which John Major had laid down as his government's pol-

icy, and which republicans had denounced as unacceptable pre-conditions.

Mr Blair, by contrast, played down the decommissioning issue and left various issues open to negotiation. That republicans are now again to be in direct contact with the Government will raise hopes that a new ceasefire could be in prospect. Unionists took comfort from Mr Blair's bald statement - "I value the union," from his emphasis on the principle of consent, and from his observation that "none of us in this hall today, even the youngest, is likely to see Northern Ireland as anything but a part of the United Kingdom." Together, these arguments amount to as strong a commitment to the union as any given by Mr Major.

But at the same time constitutional nationalists such as Mr Hume welcomed the fresh approach to republicans and the Prime Minister's assertion that the 1995 framework document, with its suggestion of strong new Anglo-Irish links, set out a reasonable basis for future negotiation. Mr Hume said people across Ireland owed Mr Blair a "debt of gratitude" and urged Sinn Féin to take up the offer of talks immediately.

He had delivered "the most comprehensive speech made by any British prime minister in the last 25 years of our Troubles." Mr Trimble welcomed the pledge that if there was no IRA ceasefire the talks, due to resume on 3 June, would go on without Sinn Féin.

"That is why the inter-party talks made no progress for the last six months, because various parties were not prepared to get into serious talks without Sinn Féin." While Mr Blair was attempting to win a new IRA ceasefire the RUC Chief Constable warned that the loyalist ceasefire was unravelling. Ronnie Flanagan accused loyalists of breaching their 30-month ceasefire with recent attacks and blamed "constituent parts" of the Combined Loyalist Military Command. "There has been a continuing disinclination of that ceasefire. This is the moment when the ceasefire is at risk," he said.

Blair milks goodwill, page 3



Youth English goes Creole

Ian Burrell

The Creole English of the Caribbean is being adopted as the common language of the English urban playground.

Schoolchildren of all races in multi-ethnic cities like London, Birmingham and Manchester are rejecting traditional English speech patterns and vocabulary in favour of the patois of the West Indies.

The expression "innit?" is being grafted to the end of sentences. Questions are not asked but "arked" and the term "wicked" has become the ultimate compliment.

The development has been identified by a team of researchers from Norway, who have carried out a four-year study of teenage English in London, which involved equipping schoolchildren with tape recorders to record their everyday conversation.

Gleik Andersen, a researcher at the University of Bergen, which is doing the study, said:

"London is very ethnically complex and people are not segregated. Features from one type of language spread to another and you get a mixture."

Among his findings was that the phrase "innit?" is now used as an "invariant tag" at the end of sentences by London teenagers of all races and even in suburban areas. Instead of saying "Shearer is a good player, isn't he?", London youngsters would say: "Shearer's a good player, innit?"

Professor John Widdowson, of the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, at the University of Sheffield, said the phrase mirrored the Welsh use of the expression "isn't it?" He said: "It's very interesting. It is similar to the French use of 'n'est-ce pas?'."

In some areas of London, the expression "is it?" has also been transformed. The sentence "Grandad is coming tomorrow" may be answered by teenagers not as "Is he?" but "Is it?"

Across the capital, verbs are

now often omitted by children in a practice which is typical of Creole. Thus, "I have got to go out" has become "I got to go out", or even "I got to go out, innit".

Mr Andersen said: "This seems to be a fairly recent development in London speech and it is absolutely spread across ethnic backgrounds. Not only

Jamaicans, Indians and Pakistanis... but also people with an Anglo-Saxon background."

Mr Andersen, who has prepared a paper on the subject called *You were gonna say that, innit?*, said Norwegian English students were obsessed with English slang and dialect.

Magazine



SCRUM DOWN



BOTTOMS UP

MIDDLESEX RUGBY SEVENS, TWICKENHAM	17 May
GLYNEDERBURY FESTIVAL OPERA	18 May - 24 May
CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW	20-23 May
ROYAL ACADEMY SUMMER EXHIBITION	1 June - 10 August
LEY CONVENT, TEST MATCH v AUSTRALIA, ENGLAND	5-9 June
THE DUFFY, EPOK	7 June
ROYAL ACADEMY	17-20 June
WARRINGTON TOWN CHANTREY	23 June - 6 July
PAUL VINTAGE GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP	28 June - 30 July
HEINLEY ROTAL REGATTA	3-6 July

Only the corrupt shed tears as Africa's great kleptocrat finally goes into exile

Kinshasa - In an emergency midnight address on Zairean state television, the government spokesman was emphatic. Laurent Kabila's rebels were poised to take Kinshasa but the population could be confident that President Mobutu Seko, 66, Zaire's ailing dictator would not stand down. Few could have found that message comforting.

Just eight hours later President Mobutu was boarding the plane which would take him first to Gbadolite, his lavish palace in his tribal home land of Equateur, and then, at last, not a moment too soon, into exile.

It was the end of the thirty-two year reign of one of Africa's last, and most accomplished, kleptocrats - a man whose power

was based on theft. Only the corrupt shed any tears, for the heavy train was at least pulling in for President Mobutu's vast army of cronies.

On the streets of the capital yesterday there was only celebration, after the news of the President's departure, spread mostly by word of mouth. For in a ransacked land like Zaire, word of mouth is the main method of communication. There are few phones, few televisions and only a handful of passable roads - fewer than there were than when the Belgians left the country. This nation has been efficiently and comprehensively looted.

One of the world's most corrupt politicians had finally gone.



MARY BRAID

It was a sweet moment for those raised in the cult of Mobutu, in a one-party state which sang Mobutu's songs and encouraged the wearing of his image on T-shirts. Yesterday in the Rue du Commerce a Zairean draper was selling a souvenir piece of Mobutu. It had been three months since he sold his last. He laughed he would soon

be selling the image of Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, who is expected to march into Kinshasa in the next few days.

It has been a remarkable revolution, a military marvel. In just seven months Kabila's rebels have marched across this giant nation of over 2 million square kilometres capturing city after city, province after province. Initially backed by outside governments - primarily Uganda and Rwanda - the rebels have been sustained nonetheless by a huge reservoir of home grown discontent.

"We did not realise the country was hollow," said one western diplomat. "Or how easily Zaire would fall."

Uganda and Rwanda initial-

ly backed the uprising in Eastern Zaire to clear millions of Hutu refugees from their borders, but the rebellion took on a life of its own.

In Kinshasa yesterday few seemed concerned about the meddling of foreign governments. "I could not care who started it," said one local resident. "So long as it brings change. Mobutu made us the joke of Africa. He humiliated his people. Under Kabila we may get our dignity back."

In the back streets of the city people were busy putting the finishing touches to white flags and scarves in anticipation of the rebels' arrival. For the past week leaders have appeared on the streets advising citizens to make

flags and advising the city's tens of thousands of undisciplined soldiers to back the anti-Mobutu elements in their ranks.

Yet the excitement yesterday was mixed with fear. The population ironically is not worried about the rebels, but about their own troops. The Zairean army is unpaid and undisciplined. Kinshasa fears another military riot before the rebels arrive.

But despite the fears, despite the uncertainty, yesterday was a day for optimism, not for fear. "Kabila cannot become Mobutu," argued Jean-Pierre, a lecturer. "We are more politically mature than when the Belgians left. We would not allow another dictator."



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QUICKLY

Alcopops investigation
An investigation into the sale of controversial alcopops was ordered by the Government yesterday.

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هذا من الأصل

news

significant shorts

Tories appoint 'Today' man as new party spin doctor

Francis Halewood, deputy editor of Radio 4's *Today* programme until January, has been appointed the Conservative Party's chief spin doctor.

Mr Halewood, who was operations manager at Conservative Central Office during the election campaign, takes over as director of communications from Charles Leighton, who resigned following the party's defeat. The Tories believe they were outmanoeuvred during the campaign by Labour's press team, led by Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell.

Paul McCann

PCs convicted 'under wrong law'

A married police officer and his policewoman lover who used their force's national computer to check on his wife's new boyfriend were entitled to have criminal convictions quashed because they were tried on the wrong charges, the High Court ruled yesterday.

Constables Paul Bignell and Victoria Parker carried out six checks on two cars belonging to the boyfriend, using the police national computer.

The High Court yesterday ruled that Southwark Crown Court was right to quash the convictions last September because the couple had authority to gain access to the computer - "even though they did not do so for an authorised purpose".

Lord Justice Pill, sitting with Mr Justice Auld, said the couple had wrongly been charged under the 1990 Act - but could have been prosecuted under the 1984 Data Protection Act.

British children hooked on lottery

More than half of British children aged eight to 16 have played the National Lottery or bought Instant scratchcards, with almost one in 10 spending £5 or more on the games each week, according to a survey released yesterday.

The School Children's Attitude Monitor carried out by The Media Business Group found that 58 per cent of those surveyed claimed to have bought tickets or scratchcards and 48 per cent said they had won prizes. The lottery watchdog, Oflot, expressed surprise at the response, which is significantly higher than that revealed in their most recent survey. Ticket sales to children aged under 16 are illegal, and retailers can be stripped of their Lottery machines if they are found to have flouted the law.

End of the road for problem Lada



That much-maligned motor, the Lada, may have reached the end of the road in Britain, it was revealed yesterday.

None of the Russian-built cars have been imported to the UK since November because of an emission standards problem.

Now, with existing stocks running low, Lada's Motor Vehicle Imports business at Carnaby near Bridlington in east Yorkshire is being offered for sale. Even if buyers are found, they would inherit the

problem, caused by difficulty in obtaining an American-built part for the Lada's fuel injection system.

The car has been on sale in the UK since 1973. About 8,000 are bought every year and there are currently 100,000 on British roads.

Lecturer attacks 'sexist' promotions

A history lecturer is set to engage Cambridge University in a historic legal battle in an attempt to make it overhaul its promotion procedures.

Dr Gillian Evans, 52, who has worked at the university for 18 years, said current procedures for promoting lecturers to professors were unfair, muddled, and possibly sexist. Now she plans to apply for judicial review by the High Court of the university's promotion system. Her first step will be to apply for leave to launch her claim - an application she hopes will be heard by the High Court within months.

Dr Evans said Cambridge was full of lecturers in their fifties and sixties who should be professors, and as a result were losing pay and status. Only a few lecturers were promoted to professorships every year, the promotions were arbitrary and unsystematic - and the overwhelming majority went to men, she said.

Pigeon fancied trip to Mexico

A pigeon released last year by fancier Ernie Mellors of Newbold, Derbyshire, has turned up 6,000 miles away in Mexico. A Mexican bird-lover found the exhausted bird and traced Mr Mellors, 63, through a pigeon-fanciers' club. The former miner said yesterday:

people



Michael Foale (centre) and fellow astronauts. Veteran of three shuttle trips (Photograph: AP)

Four months in orbit? No problem, says astronaut

British astronaut Michael Foale is undaunted by the prospect of spending four months in the accident-prone *Mir* space station, he said from space yesterday.

The Russian space station has recently suffered a serious fire and a string of breakdowns in its life-support systems.

Via a radio link from the space shuttle *Atlantis*, Dr Foale was asked on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme if he was worried that life on board *Mir* might be dangerous.

He said: "The most difficult thing we did, we did yesterday, and that was lift-off. That has by far the highest risk in it because you're going from zero miles per hour to 17,000 miles per hour."

"We've done that, we're in space, we're in orbit, and the rest of it is actually quite a lot easier."

Dr Foale, 40, originally from Louth, Lincolnshire, said the *Atlantis* crew expected to catch their first glimpse of the space station today. "We'll see it as a very bright star which will get steadily brighter and brighter."

He was looking forward to meeting two cosmonauts

on board *Mir* with whom he had trained in Russia. Dr Foale will replace US astronaut Jerry Linenger, a naval captain and medical doctor, on board *Mir*.

During his mission, he will carry out scientific experiments, as well as help with repairs and maintenance of the space station. *Atlantis* is carrying a new oxygen generator and equipment to patch up a leak in *Mir*'s cooling system.

Dr Foale, a Cambridge University postgraduate, has a doctorate in laboratory astrophysics. Pursuing a career in the US space programme, he moved to Houston, Texas to work on space shuttle navigational problems at the McDonnell Douglas Aircraft Corporation.

In June 1983 he joined NASA's Johnson Space Center, working in payload operations. He was selected for astronaut training by NASA in June 1987 and is a veteran of three space flights.

In November 1995 he flew on the first shuttle to rendezvous with *Mir*. During the flight he made a four-hour and 39-minute space walk to test the effect of extreme cold on his space suit.

Opera House chief's bolt from the blue

Mary Allen, the new head of the Royal Opera House, spoke yesterday for the first time about the surprise resignation of ROH chief executive Genista Macintosh, and her own sudden appointment to the job.

Mrs Allen, secretary-general of the Arts Council, hinted that she was embarrassed that the post had not been advertised, and that she had been "devastated" by Miss Macintosh's resignation, after just four months, because of ill health.

She said she had been on the selection panel that chose Miss Macintosh to succeed Jeremy Isaacs last year, contradicting reports that she had herself been an applicant.

Mrs Allen's current salary of £63,500 is likely to increase by

around £40,000 when she takes over at the ROH in September. Speaking in Cannes yesterday, where she had come for the announcement of the National Lottery film awards, she said her appointment had come as a "bolt from the blue".

"I was devastated by Jenny's resignation. It was totally out of the blue. I was very upset, because I was so thrilled when she was appointed. What saddens me is that she is one of the most brilliant arts managers this country has. But I have been told that she is seriously ill. I haven't seen her since her resignation but I have written to her."

"I was approached 10 days ago and told Jenny might resign. I said I would only take the job on the absolute condition that the whole board was enthusiastic."

Mrs Allen ridiculed suggestions that Miss Macintosh had fallen out with the ROH chairman Lord Chaddington, the former Arts Council Lottery Board chairman Peter Gummer. "Peter is the kindest, most supportive colleague. Peter desperately tried to persuade Jenny not to resign."

On the question of seat prices, which Miss Macintosh was determined to reduce to increase access, Mrs Allen was ambivalent. She said: "Any sensible person would say we have to have prices as low as possible. But any sensible person would also say we have to balance the books. And any sensible person would add that we have to keep putting on opera and ballet of the highest quality."

David Lister, Cannes

briefing

SOCIETY

Suicide attempts by young men double in 10 years

Suicide attempts by young men have doubled in the last 10 years, but the British "stiff upper lip" is still there, with more than a third of under-25s thinking depressed people should simply pull themselves together.

A study by the Samaritans found that 29 per cent of the 500 young people they interviewed knew someone who had died by suicide, of which 16 per cent had lost a friend or family member.

Rates of attempted suicide have always been higher among young women, but the most significant trend has been the increase among young men where the rate has risen by 63 per cent since 1990. A suicide attempt increases someone's chance of eventually dying by suicide by 100 times.

Factors associated with youth suicide include drugs and alcohol, with about one in three adolescent suicides is intoxicated at the time of death, and a further number are under the influence of drugs.

Cultural and ethnic origins also play a part with young women of south Asian origin living in the UK show very high risks of dying by suicide in comparison with the average risk for women in England and Wales. Physical and sexual abuse have been shown to distinguish suicidal adolescents from those who are depressed but not self-destructive.

The following e-mail addresses can be used to reach the Samaritans: jo@samaritans.org and samaritans@anon.towells.com. The UK telephone number is 0345 90 90 90 (all calls charged at local rate).

NATURE

No golden future for eagles

England's only pair of golden eagles may be getting too old to breed. But even if this is the end for them south of the border, conservationists have no plans to intervene and reintroduce Britain's biggest bird of prey into England.

Since 1969, a single pair have been nesting on a crag overlooking Haweswater in the Lake District. In 1976 the male was replaced by a new arrival and in 1982 the female was replaced by another. Throughout the entire period they have raised 18 chicks, but none are known to have started breeding in England.

The eagles had a long run of bad luck in the 1990s, raising no chicks for four consecutive years, but last year they had one which flew from the nest. This year, it appears that the eggs, laid in March, have failed to hatch once more. Advancing years may be to blame, even though golden eagles can live for 30 years or more. The male is at least 25 and the female is over 18.

There are more than 600 pairs of golden eagles in Scotland. Something about the English upland habitats appears not to suit them, so even if the Lake District pair stopped breeding there would be little point in introducing them deliberately, says the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Nicholas Schoon



HEALTH

Asthma toll begins to fall

Death rates from asthma in England and Wales have turned the corner and are heading downwards after years of increasing prevalence, according to research published yesterday.

Analysis of death certificates shows that mortality from asthma peaked for most age-groups in 1989, and is now declining by about 6 per cent per year, probably as a result of improved medical treatment.

But the over-65s have missed out on the improvement, with death rates dropping by only 2 per cent for the 65-74 age group and not at all for the over-75s, revealed the Southampton University study, published in the *British Medical Journal*.

Meanwhile, separate research published in *The Lancet* suggests that one in five cases of asthma may now be caused by exposure to chemicals in the workplace.

Around 250 chemicals and powders have been shown to cause work-related asthma, and employees are at risk in a wide range of occupations.

Among the risky substances are: henna, for hairdressers; coffee bean dust, for coffee roasters; flour, for bakers; cobalt dust, for metal grinders; and oil mists, for tool setters.

ALCOHOL

Home is where the bar is

Drinkers are guzzling more beer at home than in pubs and bars, according to a survey by brewers Whitbread.

According to the study, sales of beer from off-licences and supermarkets grew by 2 per cent last year, reflecting a trend towards drinking at home already seen in the US and Australia.

Not surprisingly, the market's peak for 1996 was during the Euro 96 football championships in June, when take-home sales saw a 46 per cent increase.

Altogether, take-home beer sales in Britain totalled £2,593m in 1996, equivalent to 9.1m barrels. The report places Tesco at the top of the retail league, with a 10 per cent share of the market, followed by Sainsbury's on 7 per cent.

So-called "premium" lagers are said to be the best-selling beers, with Stella Artois in the top slot for sales, holding 27 per cent of the market, equivalent to £144m.

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SWANSEA CORK FERRIES

Miles ahead of the the rest

Mother Teresa arrives in Rome to visit Pope

Her frail health tested by the long flight from India, Mother Teresa (right) fell ill on her arrival at Rome airport yesterday morning, and had to be given oxygen, her doctors said.

Back at work after months of illness, the 86-year-old nun had travelled to Rome to meet Pope John Paul II and to witness the taking of vows by new members of her Missionaries of Charity order.

"It was her first voyage after her illnesses, an already long flight made longer by a stopover," said cardiologist Dr Vincenzo Bilotta, who has cared for Mother Teresa during previous visits. "After a half hour, she felt better. She had brought four Indian children who are being adopted and she insisted on presenting them personally to the Italian adoptive parents," Dr Bilotta added.

Mother Teresa smiled and waved to crowds as she left the airport. She will have a check-up while in Rome, but, in the meantime, Dr Bilotta said, she appeared fit enough to see the Pope later in



her stay. No time has been announced for the meeting.

It was the first trip abroad since a series of illnesses that kept her mostly confined to a bed or wheelchair.

Accompanying Mother Teresa was Sister Nirmala, who was elected in March to succeed her as head of the order.

Mother Teresa, winner of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, began the Missionaries of Charity in 1947. Now it has more than 4,000 nuns and runs 517 orphanages, homes for the poor, AIDS hospices and other charity centres.

INDEPENDENT

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BLT: FOR A WEAK STOMACH

Blair m on stre

BLT: British, lousy and tasteless

NOT FOR A WEAK STOMACH ...

Boots "Shapers" tuna and cucumber
£1.05
The big idea for the "Shapers" range is simply not to add much of a filling. This sandwich comprised a mere sprinkling of tuna, a lettuce leaf and three slices of cucumber. Even the bread was rationed into thin, rubbery slices: it was not hard to see how there are only 188 calories in this travesty of a sandwich. Rating: 1/10

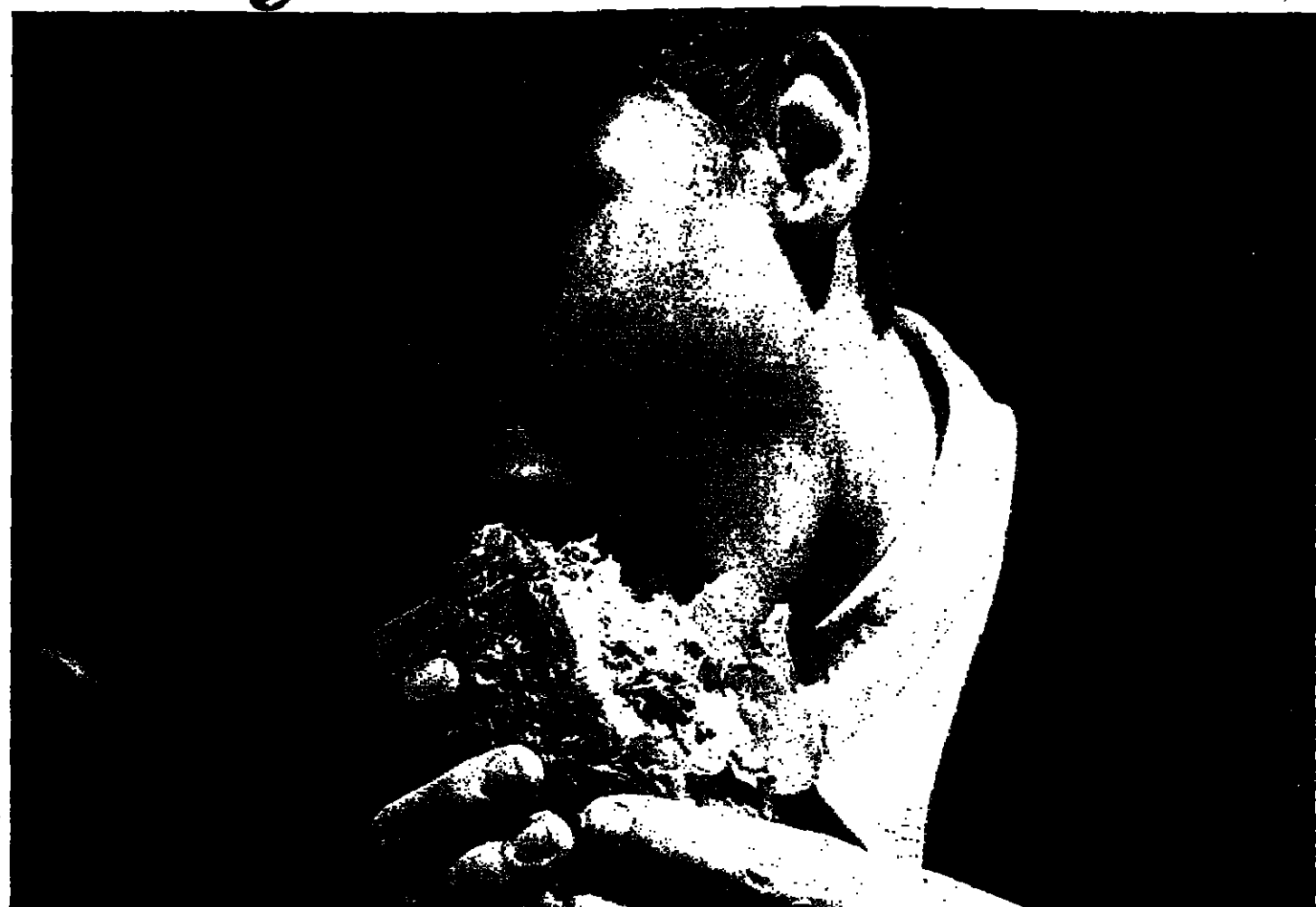
Marks & Spencer prawn and mayonnaise
£1.19
Not at all bad. The filling is fairly substantial, with more prawns than normal. This was particularly impressive as the label proclaimed there was "40 per cent less fat". But the bread was soggy in some places, hard and crusty in others. Verdict: 6/10

InterCity brie and bacon
£1.95
This sandwich is edible, if a little bland, so long as you don't open it up and examine the contents too closely. The bacon, though plentiful, looks suspect. Both the brie and the bacon had lost their flavour: the most prominent taste of all was the malted wholegrain bread. Rating: 4/10

Catering & Allied (Independent canteen) vegetarian sausage with raita sauce
£1.30
The plainest sandwich of the lot: wedges of authentic tasting "vegetarian sausage" on buttered bread. The exotic sounding raita sauce - a mixture of yoghurt, mint and cucumber - had been smeared very sparingly on only one of the slices of bread. Rating: 5/10

Prat A. Manger tuna, mayonnaise and cucumber
£1.89
This was King Sandwich. Freshly made, it was undoubtedly the winner. The filling was a substantial amount of tuna, the lettuce was crisp and the cucumber fresh. But the bread was a little crusty around the edges. Verdict: 8/10

Patterson & Bartlett (garage sandwich makers) chicken tikka
£2.45
Along the right of this sandwich is enough to put you off. With three days to go before the sell-by date the bread was already hard. The contents looked reprobated. Though four tasters took a bite out of this sandwich, they were unable to swallow it. Verdict: 0/10



United tastes of America: Tuna, chicken, cheese and salad served up at a US-style sandwich bar in London. Photograph: Nicole Kurtz

British don't use their loaf over sandwiches, say Americans

Kathy Marks

The Sandwich Industry Awards Dinner last night should have been a festive occasion. Men and women dedicated to placing bits of food between slices of bread had gathered to watch the restaurateur Michel Roux judge the Innovative Sandwich Recipe of the Year. But a dark cloud hung over the evening.

Earlier this week the reputation of the British sandwich had been subjected to a savage attack. The *Wall Street Journal*, esteemed organ of the American financial world, ran a front-page article which claimed that "barely edible sandwiches dominate the landscape" in Britain. It said Britain's "biggest contribution to gastronomy" had been reduced to factory-produced, film-wrapped bread containing fillings "so similar in taste that they were barely distinguishable to an American palate".

For the cream of the British sandwich establishment, this proved hard

to stomach. It was here that the product was invented, when the 4th Earl of Sandwich absent-mindedly shoved a piece of beef between two slices of toast during a 24-hour gambling session. True, there was a time when the best that British catering could muster was two limp slices of white Mother's Pride smeared thickly with margarine, with a sliver of cadaver-coloured ham inside.

Back then, aficionados would gaze longingly across the Atlantic, where a sandwich meant a triple-decker pasty on rye, with dill pickles on the side and "hold the mayonnaise". It meant 10 varieties of bread stuffed generously with a wide choice of succulent fillings. A square meal, in fact.

But times have changed, argue the likes of Jim Winship, director of the British Sandwich Association. He believes that the advent of freshly made supermarket sandwiches, such as Marks & Spencer's hugely popular range, and of outlets such as Pret

à Manger, with their exotic fillings, means that the British industry can hold its head high.

The food critic Egon Ronay is another defender of the British sandwich. "Ridiculous," he spluttered yesterday, dismissing the *Wall Street Journal*'s attack. "Coming from the home of junk food, I find this quite extraordinary."

But there are still some who believe that, with the exception of the "gourmet" chains, there has been little evolution since the days when the British Rail sandwich was staple fodder for stand-up comedians.

In the London office of the *New York Times*, Sarah Lyall, a staff correspondent, gave her considered opinion. "British sandwiches are repulsive," she said. "You walk into a sandwich shop and see a glass case containing glutinous lumps of stuff with crusty bits on top."

"They use the same spoon for all the ingredients, so you get prawns leaking into your ham or tuna. Some

of the mixtures are gross. Why do you guys put corn in everything? And to be honest, I've evolved past white bread. The ingredients in America are much fresher and they're not disguised with a whole bunch of sauce slopped over them."

The difference in products, Ms Lyall believes, is a reflection of the British and American psyches. "You English have a tendency to be grateful for what you're given. Americans are much more demanding. They believe they have a right to fresh, good food." But Bill Bryson, the American author, had an unexpectedly kind word for the British sandwich. Mr Bryson, who criss-crossed the country by train for his travelogue, *Notes from a Small Island*, said: "When I was travelling across the Western Highlands I couldn't help but notice British Rail's very fine chicken tikka sandwich. The British sandwich is something you can be very proud of now."

Leading article, page 19

Blair milks goodwill on streets of Belfast



Crowd-puller: Tony Blair gets a warm welcome from Ulster's normally taciturn farmers. Photograph: Peter Macdonald

David McKittrick
Ireland correspondent

Tony Blair, meeting the crowds at an agricultural show in Belfast yesterday, came into direct personal contact with Ulster's horny-handed sons of toil. "I'm getting really firm handshakes here," he said over his shoulder.

Kyle Lucas, 38, from the splendidly named Nuts Corner, made the reverse observation after shaking hands with the Prime Minister. "He hasn't milked many cows, that boy. He has nice soft hands," he said. There were cows aplenty at Balmoral yesterday, but Mr Blair milked none of them. He worked the crowd to perfection, however, delighting the normally taciturn farmers and farmers' wives who flocked to shake his hand. "I got his autograph," beamed one matron. "I'm all pleased."

Her companion enthused: "He's very nice, very friendly, I was very taken with him. Love-

ly soft hands, he doesn't do much work. We've hard hands, we're farmers." And her hands were indeed tough, firm, hardened: when Tony pressed her flesh, she had clearly forcefully pressed back.

Mo Mowlam, his Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, followed in his wake. She is another crowd-pleaser, the first touchy-feely Cabinet minister to be based in Belfast, as cordial and friendly as her predecessor, Sir Patrick Mayhew, was patrician and remote.

Mr Blair had just snatched a quick lunch in a function room with 12 sides, a construction which gives it the nickname of the Turnipery Bit. There he delivered a speech intended to give new impetus to the Northern Ireland political processes, which by common consent has recently lacked direction.

Just over two years ago John Major stood in the same hall to launch the framework document, a joint London-Dublin paper sketching out a future in

which Northern Ireland would remain within the Union, but take on an increasingly Anglo-Irish aspect.

As the months passed and the authority of the Major government ebbed away the framework document was barely mentioned, but yesterday Mr Blair reinstated it as one of the central pillars of his policy. Sinn Féin, the IRA and loyalists were invited to arrange themselves around that proposition: the IRA was told to stop the violence, and loyalists were warned to avoid trouble in the summer's parades.

Most Protestants want to avoid another bad marching season, but some elements are apparently intent on putting their right to march above almost all other considerations.

Many republican supporters now want another IRA ceasefire: Mr Blair's move will put to the test their ability to deliver the whole republican movement. Certainly, all sides appreciate that it will need an

audacious group to be the first to pitch itself in direct confrontation with a government of such authority.

His political messages delivered, it was outside into the sunshine to meet the farming community, which exuded goodwill but also anxiety about its livelihood. "I asked him to do something about BSE," said James Newell from Ballymoney, holding one of the prize Hereford bulls. "I said that all these cattle were destined for the burner, to be destroyed and incinerated, unless something was done. He said he had inherited a very difficult situation and would do his best."

A woman from Meath was delighted when Mr Blair told her his mother's family came from Donegal and were farmers. And a blonde woman with a matching prize-winning bull, a blonde D'Aquaine, chuckled: "We introduced our bull to him. He's called Major, we told him he was the only Major to win anything this year ..."

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Ministers launch alcopops inquiry

Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

An "urgent" investigation into the sale of controversial alcopops was ordered by the Government yesterday while a new survey revealed that nearly six out of ten schoolchildren say they drink them.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, said that the Government was "deeply concerned" about the issues surrounding the sale of sweet alcoholic drinks, some of which are stronger than many beers, and warned that under-age drinking could lead to a "downward spiral of offending".

"Alcopops abuse is a real concern. We all know the links between alcohol abuse and crime," he said. "I have asked George Howard to look urgently with other ministers at the industry's own reaction to the problem. They will also consider what further action may be necessary to stop this abuse developing."

Mr Straw's announcement comes a day after alcopop makers were condemned as "grossly irresponsible" by a judge after he heard a 14-year-old boy got drunk on alcoholic lemonade and cider, and then burned down a school. Earlier this week the drinks industry watchdog, the Portman Group, said that shops should be able to boycott alcopop products which violate the drinks industry's code of conduct.

The survey of 700 children in seven schools showed that 59 per cent of youngsters claim to drink alcopops. The largest consumption of the drinks was in Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham, according to the survey carried out for *The Sun* newspaper.

It found 48 per cent of children have their first drink at the age of 11, and more than nine out of ten children aged between 14 and 17 claimed that they drank alcohol every week.

Last month, anti-alcohol campaigners called for Moo, an alcoholic milk drink to be banned on the grounds it may appeal to children.

Since the voluntary code was set up, there have been seven products which have had to alter their packaging or marketing because they were deemed to have violated the code.

Government responsibility for regulating alcopops - which have an average alcohol content of 5 per cent - falls between several government departments including the Home Office, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Alcohol Concern welcomed the Government's initiative. Its director Eric Appleby said: "We have been very concerned for two years that these drinks appeal to children as young as 13."

"The drinks industry's own attempts at self-regulation through the Portman Group have up to now been a failure, with some manufacturers simply ignoring the group's recommendations and changes to packaging taking months to reach the shelves."

"The Portman Group has not been able to show that it is able to offer effective or independent control over the appeal of alcopops to young people."

David Foley, head of policy for the Portman Group said: "We share the Government's concern about underage drinking and we want to do all we can to work with the Government to do something about the problem."



Blooming: Rebecca Sutton, from Merseyside, gets to grips with botany at Chelsea yesterday in the run-up to next week's show Photograph: PA

Shopper tells of knife ordeal

Matthew Brace

A woman's shopping expedition turned into a horrifying ordeal at the hands of a knife-wielding robber in which she feared for her life.

Nova Hughes, a 24-year-old trainee buyer for Marks and Spencer, was grabbed at knifepoint in a supermarket car park in Shepherd's Bush, west London, on Saturday afternoon and forced into the boot of her hatchback car.

She spoke for the first time of her ordeal yesterday, just hours after a virtually identical attack took place a few miles away. Last night, a 29-year-old

man was being questioned by police in connection with the second robbery.

"There was a hand on my mouth and a knife to my throat. A guy said 'I have got a knife, I want the money'," Miss Hughes told a news conference in Hammersmith, west London.

"I put my hands down. He got behind me and he told me to get into the boot."

She told her attacker that she was scared and suffered from claustrophobia and begged him to let her go.

"I told him I didn't want to get in but he forced me in." Her ordeal ended about 45

minutes later when the 6ft-tall man ran off leaving the boot open after withdrawing £200 from her bank account using her cashless card. She hanged on the inside of the boot but no-one came to her aid.

Miss Hughes appealed to anybody who saw the man in the NCP car park on Saturday afternoon to come forward with information.

"I think he has done it before. The whole time he was completely in control. When I panicked he told me to calm down. I think he could do it again," she said.

NCP has offered a £5,000 reward for information leading to

the arrest of the woman's attacker. It has also promised a review of the security at the car park where her ordeal happened.

Detective Inspector Patrick Lewis said: "It was a very frightening experience. It was a cowardly attack on a defenceless person."

A carbon-copy attack occurred at 10.30pm on Wednesday in Hampstead, north London, when a man snatched a 54-year-old woman from the street, took her bank cards and locked her in the boot of her car.

The woman suffered a cut to the face in the incident. She

says she was forced to hand over her bank cards and PIN numbers before being hustled into the boot of her Renault Clio through the back seat and driven around for 80 minutes.

She was eventually freed in an underground car park in Camden, and the attacker is alleged to have driven off in the car.

In the early hours of yesterday morning a 29-year-old man was arrested at gunpoint by a police armed response team in Moorgate in the City of London. Last night he was being questioned in connection with the second robbery.

New diet pill can block out fat

Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

The first of a new generation of anti-obesity drugs that work as fat blockers instead of appetite suppressants could be on the American market this year after US Government scientists recommended its approval.

The drug, Xenical, works by blocking the enzymes that digest fat which prevents it being absorbed from the gut. With the correct dose, a third of the fat eaten is blocked and excreted instead of ending up on the hips and thighs.

Traditional diet pills target the central nervous system and have an amphetamine-like action which suppresses the appetite. However, they can only be taken for limited periods and trials have shown that patients tend to regain weight lost when they stop using them.

Trials of Xenical, whose chemical name is orlistat, in 4,000 patients in the US and Europe have shown it can cut about 600 calories a day. The average patient in the one year trial lost 10 kilos (more than 15 stones).

However, it is not a licence to gorge on cream cakes and burgers as the drug has unpleasant side effects. The presence of extra fat in the gut, which must be excreted, causes diarrhoea and a delicate condition known as "anal leakage" leading to "oily faecal spotting" which gets worse as more fat is consumed.

Although some patients dropped out of the trials because of the side effects, one of the most surprising findings was that others welcomed them because they provided a measure of biofeedback, indicating when they were eating too much fat.

On an average British diet containing 90 grams of fat a day, the drug prevents 30 grams being absorbed, equivalent to 270 calories. Doctors say a cut of a third in fat intake could reduce the incidence of heart disease and other disorders.

The drug's producer, Hoffman-La Roche, has applied for a licence to the Medicines Control Agency in the UK and is awaiting approval from the Food and Drugs Administration in the US.

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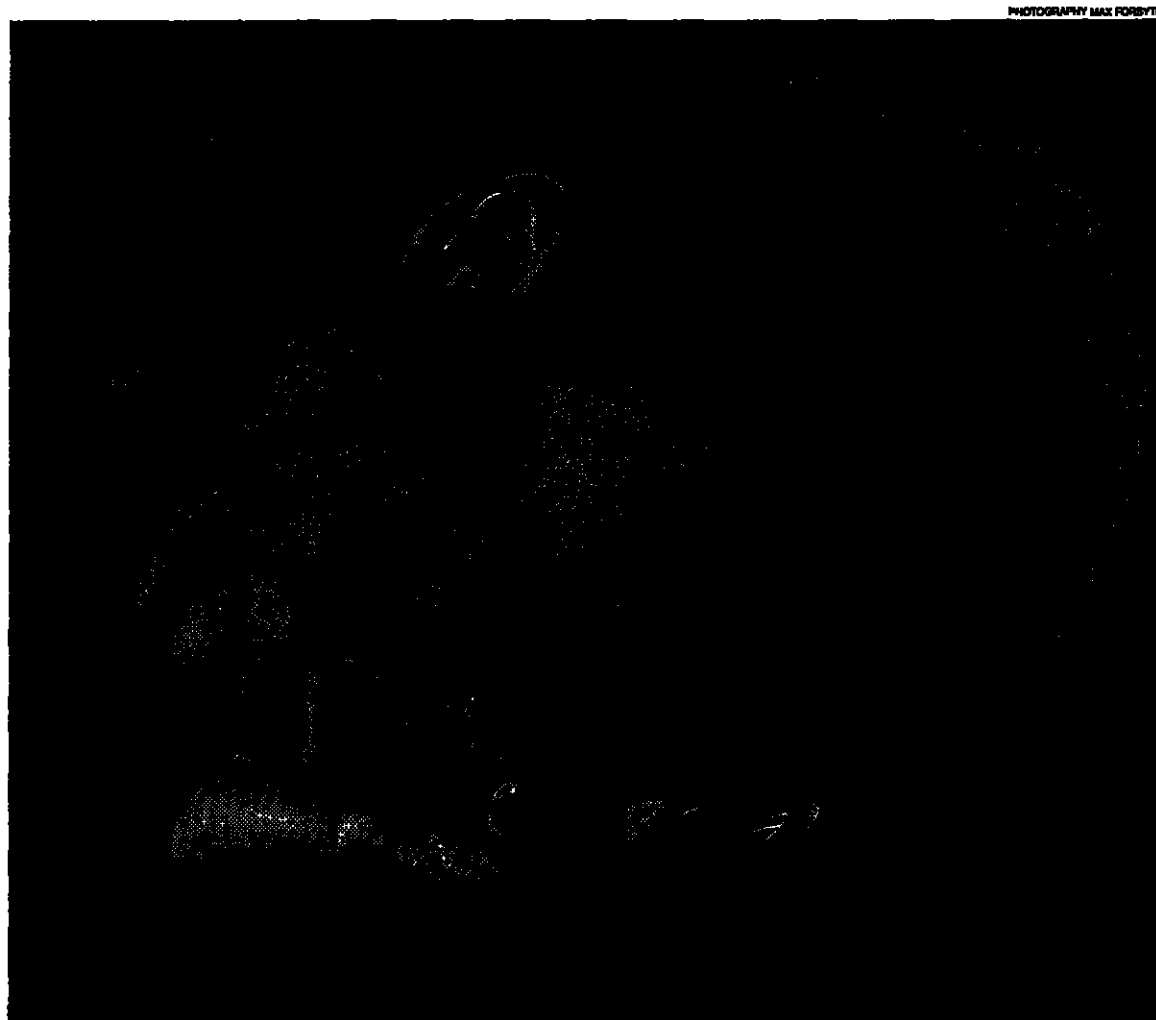


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politics

Plan for child prisons to be scrapped

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

Jails for persistent child offenders – one of the Conservatives' most controversial law and order policies – look set to be axed by the Labour government.

In a second move Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, will abandon Conservative proposals to end the automatic right to trial by jury for certain offences and halt the jailing of almost all fine and television licence defaulters.

The announcement to have five new Secure Training Centres for 200 young offenders aged 12 to 14, was criticised by penal reform groups.

Michael Howard, the then Home Secretary, made them a key component of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act to help tackle juvenile crime. Persistent young offenders were to be given sentences from six months to two years under new Secure Training Orders.

But since 1994, the Home Office has become bogged down with planning disputes as local residents and councils opposed the "child jails". Just before the general election the first centre, at Cookham Wood in Kent,

was granted planning approval, but the other four jails are still no nearer being set up.

It is understood that the Government is carrying out a review of the proposals for child jails and is set to abandon the scheme. The existing contract at Cookham Wood, which has accommodation for 40 people, will be honoured, but the centre will probably be used to house juveniles on remand awaiting trial.

Labour has already made clear that it prefers to build more local authority secure places, rather than having privately run child jails that are expensive to run. The other centres were intended for Gringley in Nottinghamshire, Olney, Warwickshire, Medonsley, County Durham, and Kidlington near Oxford.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "We would welcome the abandonment of Secure Training Centres – they went ahead against all professional opinion. They will be extremely expensive to run and will do nothing to reduce crime."

In a second attack on Tory policy the Home Office will ditch plans by Michael Howard to end

the automatic right to elect jury trial in a range of cases, including assault, many indecency charges, theft and burglary.

However, it is understood that a raft of other measures for swifter justice drawn up by the Home Office civil servants are likely to be accepted by the new government. These include dealing with offenders aged 17 in adult rather than youth courts; removing the right of the Crown Prosecution Service to discontinue cases on public interest grounds and allowing stipendiary magistrates to sit alone in youth courts.

Mr Straw, confronted with a prison population of 60,000-plus and rising, is also examining a number of ways to reduce the time inmates spent in jail on remand awaiting trial and cutting the number of fine defaulters who were sent to prison. He hopes these changes will free 6,000 cells.

Mr Straw's first visit to a jail, Winchester in Hampshire, as Home Secretary, was overshadowed yesterday by news that a 21-year-old man serving a three-month sentence for possession of drugs, theft and affray, was found dead in his cell, having apparently committed suicide.



Close shave: A scissor-happy inmate approaches Jack Straw as the Home Secretary watched a hairdressing workshop during his visit to Winchester jail

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Hague ahead in leadership race

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

William Hague moved ahead of the field in the Conservative leadership race yesterday, brushing aside an invitation to debate with Stephen Dorrell and setting off on a triumphal tour of the country.

The former Secretary of State for Wales, at 36 the youngest of the six contenders by nine years, said he was "flattered" to be picked out by Mr Dorrell as the only one worthy of a head-to-head, but suggested that he felt such a meeting unnecessary.

The move followed an earlier rejection by Mr Hague of an attempt by Michael Howard, the former home secretary, to include him in his own campaign as running-mate.

At a press conference yesterday, the 45-year-old former health secretary had claimed that Mr Hague was the only other candidate who represented a clear break with the past for the party. He had written to him to suggest a debate under a neutral chairman, he added.

"This debate will allow both of us to set out our approach to the task which lies ahead, and it will allow the party to make an informed choice between us," he said, adding that both he and Mr Hague offered the party a choice to take on a leader from "the next generation".

In the first formal news conference of his campaign, Mr Dorrell also spoke of his desire to "democratise" the party and ensure that all its supporters were engaged in its processes.

He suggested that under a new constitution the whole Conservative Party should be involved in a system which would subject their leader to an annual re-election campaign. Two hours later, Mr Hague issued a statement claiming that such a meeting was unnecessary as he was meeting more than 1,000 members of his party in a series of six regional meetings.

"In addition, I have an extensive programme of private meetings with colleagues to address any issue they wish to. I believe that this approach is the most constructive way of addressing the issues and concerns of Parliamentary colleagues and the wider Conservative Party rather than the divisive format of a debate," he said.

Mr Hague began the day by opening the day's Parliamentary debate on the Queen's Speech for the Opposition, and ended it with the first of those meetings in his home territory of South Yorkshire. In the next fortnight, he will also speak in Edinburgh, London, Bristol, Coventry and Manchester.

He told the House of Commons that the government's devolution plans would be "the most far-reaching constitutional changes for years," and warned against any gagging of backbenchers who objected to them, such as Tam Dalyell, the Labour MP for Linlithgow. "We are not talking here about members of the Government, bound by collective responsibility," he said. "We are talking about backbenchers with a clear record of speaking out on this matter, with long-held and clearly expressed views."

A MORI poll for yesterday's Times showed Mr Hague battling with John Redwood for second place behind Kenneth Clarke with both the party faithful and the public, though. Mr Clarke secured 25 per cent support, while Mr Hague and John Redwood each had 11 per cent.

William Hague: Plans to hold six regional meetings

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Home-rule Scots seek elusive enemy

Stephen Goodwin

More than 500 Scots will gather at the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh today at the opening rally for a "Yes" vote in the referendum for a Scottish Parliament. No time has been lost in mobilising the home-rule troops, but like an advance guard in eerily silent terrain, where, they wonder, is the enemy?

As good democrats, the home-rulers are hoping a "No" campaign will emerge to ensure a lively debate on devolution and counter voter apathy – though they would not want it to be too effective.

Conservative sources were yesterday confident that a "No" campaign would get underway "in the next few weeks". But the party itself will not be fronting the campaign and there are doubts about funding.

The campaign against Labour's devolution proposals in 1979 got substantial backing from the Scottish business community. However, one businessman told *The Independent* yesterday that he doubted that wealthy backers would be so keen to put their heads above the parapet this time.

Today's rally is the first by

Scotland Forward, a non-party grouping funded by pro-devolution business people, trade unions and individuals. The meeting was due to be held in Parliament House on Calton Hill but the venue had to be moved as the numbers registering surged past the 250 capacity.

Nigel Smith, the Glasgow businessman chairing Scotland Forward, said his greatest fear was of complacency among home rule supporters. "The other side are very likely to have a lot of money and the ability to mount an ambush late in the campaign when it really matters."

The referendum, asking Scots if they agree or disagree with the need for a Parliament and whether it should have tax-raising powers, is expected to be held in early September. Henry McLeish, the Scottish Office minister responsible for devolution, will give the Government's blessing to the Yes campaign at the rally, though no public funds will be provided.

To the relief of Yes campaigners, two Scottish Nationalists are likely to take up places on the group's executive alongside Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors and union and business leaders.

Alex Salmond, the SNP leader, welcomed the launch of Scotland Forward but will hold back from full endorsement in case the Government's home rule White Paper puts too much of a Westminster straitjacket on the new Parliament.

Two seats will be kept open on the executive for Scots Conservatives but no approaches are expected until the party has established some direction in the wake of its election disaster. Whether or not to embrace home rule will be debated at the Conservative's annual conference in Perth next month.

A party spokesman said it was "likely that many members" of the Tory party in Scotland would join a No campaign.

Tam Dalyell, the Labour MP who helped sink devolution in 1979, said he would not be joining a No campaign but if asked to address meetings would offer his rebel opinions – "Have speech and, if dates are possible, will travel."

On the Government's two questions, Mr Dalyell would say "No" to a Parliament but "Yes" to tax varying powers. Without powers to tax, he said, the Parliament would be a talking shop and end in a "frustrated fiasco".

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news

Dinosaur paws make a giant impression

Kim Sengupta

They were the mother of all footprints, dating back to the Jurassic Age, and made by the largest land animals to walk the earth. And they could easily have ended up next to the gnomes and ornamental pond in a suburban garden.

The largest dinosaur tracks discovered in Britain, a find of global importance, are being guarded by a fence at a National Trust quarry in Dorset. Sauropods, which were giant herbivores, made the 53 prints 140 million years ago in what is now Keates Quarry, Worth Matravers. The largest was 44in across — the creature making it would have been 90 feet long and 12 feet high at the hip.

Kevin Keates, who leases the area from the Trust, confessed he had no idea what he had found, and had it not been for a naturalist alerting him, the rocks could have fin-

ished in someone's garden. Palaeontologists could hardly contain their excitement. Jo Wright, of Bristol University, said sauropod footprints were rare throughout the world — the only other occurrence had been in Yorkshire.

"This is really, really important. It is very important globally because the Purbeck limestone group, the rock in which the footprints were found, is at the junction between the Upper Jurassic and Lower Cretaceous periods. This is one of the very few sites in the world you can see this."

"It seems the tracks were made by around a dozen dinosaurs. There seem to be at least three different directions in which the tracks go."

The long-necked, long-tailed sauropods could weigh up to 70 tons. Dr Wright thought the Dorset tracks were probably made by animals weighing around 30 tons. The area where they

were found is one of the most important fossil sites in the world.

In prehistoric times it was the limestone shoreline of a freshwater lagoon and it had yielded footprints of carnivorous, herbivorous, and armoured dinosaurs.

Mr Keates, who had been quarrying the site for 30 years, uncovered the tracks in September, but it was a local naturalist, Trev Haysom, who alerted him to the fact they were dinosaur prints.

He said: "I did not have a clue what they were, because they were not normal three-toe dinosaur prints."

"If they had not been spotted the whole area would have been excavated and broken up. The site would have been used for rockery and slabs, or whatever we could make out of it."

The National Trust will study how to conserve the footprints and open the area to visitors.



Time travellers: Jo Wright, of Bristol University, sweeping one of the prints, which could have ended up in a garden rockery

Photograph: PA

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Tory goes to court over poll defeat

Steve Boggan

Gerry Malone, the former Tory health minister who lost his Winchester seat by two votes, is to launch a High Court petition aimed at overturning the result. Constitutional and election experts said he had a *prima facie* case, but the Liberal Democrat victor, Mark Oaten, said he would fight the challenge.

Mr Malone lost the seat after two recounts but remains unhappy about the way some ballot papers were rejected for reasons that ultimately favoured Mr Oaten. In a statement yesterday he said the first count did not conclude until 6am on 2 May. According to the Liberal Democrats, that indicated a majority of 290 for Mr Oaten.

Despite the extent of the majority, Mr Malone succeeded in asking the acting returning officer, David Cowan, for a recount, which put him ahead by 22 votes. At 7.45am, a second recount was ordered to begin at 2pm, which resulted in victory for Mr Oaten by two votes. But Mr Malone remained unhappy and is asking for another recount. The court could also order a fresh election.

"The way in which the count was conducted has been widely condemned as unsatisfactory," he said. "Only during the second count did a significant number of ballot papers emerge which were rejected for 'want of the official mark', in breach of the Parliamentary Election Rules."

"It is the responsibility of the Returning Officer's staff, charged with issuing ballot papers to voters at polling stations, to ensure the proper marking of ballot papers. It is my understanding that a majority of these void ballots were cast in my favour and, had they been counted, I would have won the election."

The "official mark" is a letter or perforation stamped on ballot papers as they are given to voters. It ensures fake ballot papers cannot be stuffed into the boxes during polling, but it would appear that either polling officials, or the machine they used, failed to ensure the papers were properly marked.

Mr Malone further alleges that 125 votes were "rejected as being void for uncertainty". These papers could have been left blank or may have carried more than one cross, being simply "spoiled". Mr Malone said two of these were wrongly rejected and were the subject of a protest by his agent during the count. And he said a further eight votes were rejected on the grounds that "they bore a mark by which the voter could be identified." This usually means that the voter signed their ballot paper. However, Mr Malone added: "I have received legal advice that they, too, could have been wrongly rejected."

Mr Oaten, who has taken his seat and sworn the oath of allegiance, responded yesterday by appointing solicitors and engaging Queen's Counsel.

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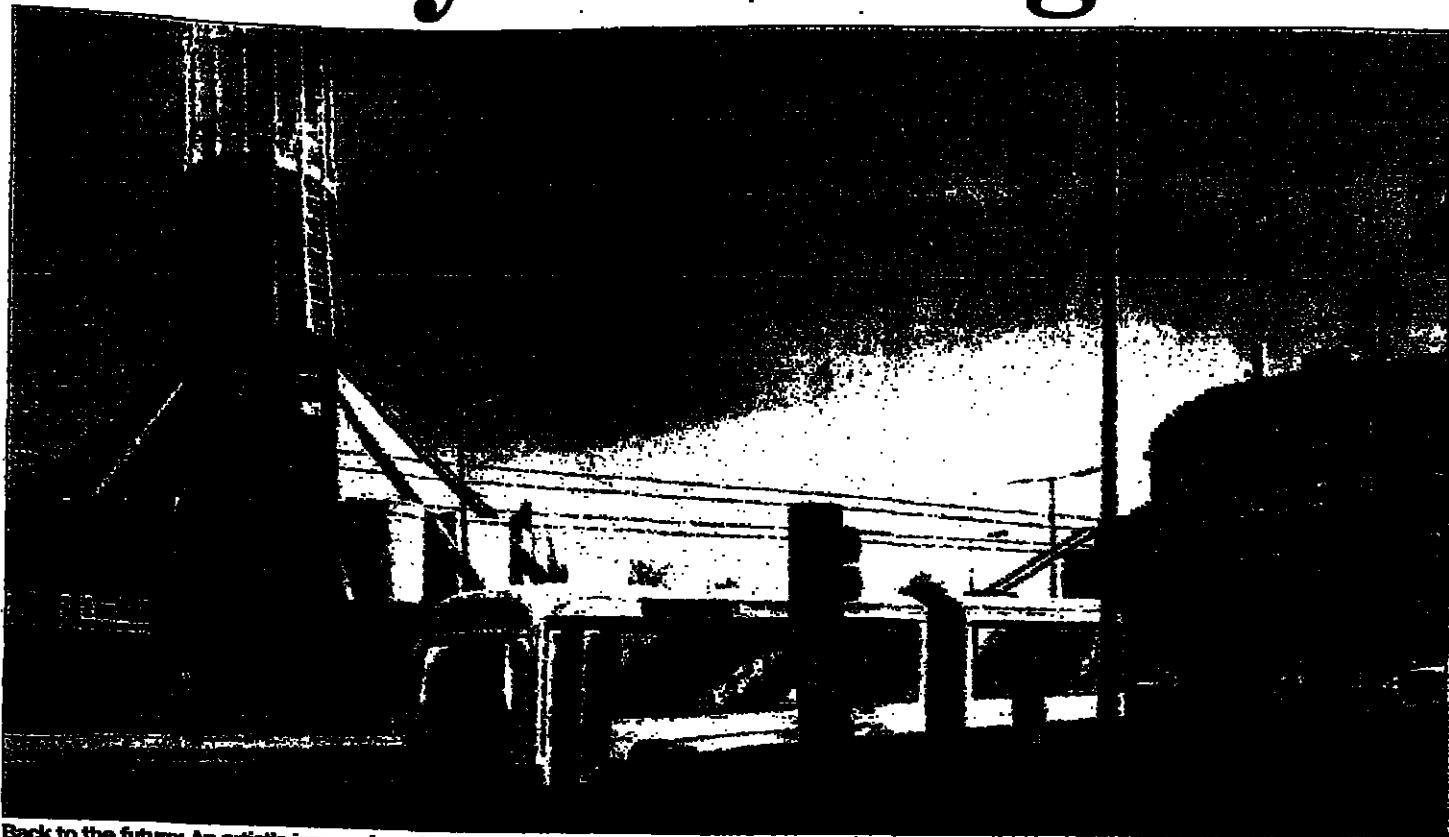
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Trolleybuses' highwire act set to return



Back to the future: An artist's impression of how trolley buses will look on the streets of Liverpool in the new millennium. Top right: The way they were

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Trolleybuses, the guided electric vehicles of yesteryear, are to return to British streets in the new millennium. Liverpool will be the first city to install a network of electrified routes, which transport planners have recently returned to after successful schemes in Germany reduced pollution levels.

Merseytravel, the region's passenger transport authority, opted for a system of guided electric buses to serve busy routes into the city centre. Councilors chose the trolley bus option ahead of expensive tram systems - which have been successful in Manchester, but costly, and ineffective in Sheffield.

Planners in the city believe the new network is necessary because increasing congestion will make traditional bus journeys too long and that the new guided routes will offer more direct journeys to areas at present badly served by public transport.

The Merseyside Rapid Transit Project will be segregated from traffic for "the majority of its route", so journey times will be much faster than at present by bus allowing, so the authority claims, a "speedy trip". The first line, costing £50m, will



Trolleybuses, of course, have no exhaust. The advantage is that the mechanics are relatively simple and wearing parts few. The disadvantage would be the network of overhead power cables they require.

The project will be overseen for Merseytravel by Professor Simon Lee, of Liverpool Hope University College, who said: "What we are proposing is set to improve not only the way people can travel in Merseyside but the perception of the area as a cultural centre with a positive vision of the future."

Other cities have considered the return of trolleybuses. London Transport chiefs have long viewed the vehicles, last seen in the capital 35 years ago, as an efficient and environment-friendly way to beat traffic congestion. Despite a number of radical proposals issued by LT directors for nine areas not currently served well by rail, the plans were scuppered by a lack of government funding.

Although Liverpool's system will be under public-sector supervision, it will be built and maintained by a private-sector consortium consisting of a subsidiary of bus group Cowi and part of Alcatel Alsthom. Cash will be raised by local authority borrowing, European Union grants and private sector investment.

Uncle guilty of murdering four children in fire attack

Steve Boggan

A Freemason who murdered four of his nieces and nephews in an arson attack after being abandoned by his wife was jailed for life yesterday.

Fred Heyworth, 59, shook visibly as a jury at Winchester Crown Court found him guilty of deliberately pouring petrol through the letterbox of the children's home and setting fire to it because his estranged wife was staying there.

"What evil brainstorm prompted you to act as you did we shall never know," the judge, Mrs Justice Steel, said. "This is a tragedy that will remain with you and with others for a very long time. The consequences of your act will live with you forever."

The court was told that Heyworth, of Southampton, Hampshire, had been depressed and angry after his wife, Janette, 22 years his junior, had left him and moved in with her sister, Beverly Good, and Beverly's husband, Mike.

Last May, days after describing the Good family as "scum", Heyworth cycled to their home in Sholing, Southampton, carrying a can of petrol which he poured through the letter box. He set fire to it and in the subsequent blaze, Terry Good, 12, Alison, 10, Nicola, 8, and Patrick, 6, perished.

The jury of eight men and three women found him guilty of their murder and of the attempted murder of Mr and Mrs Good and another daughter, Kelly, 15, who was

badly burned. Most in the house were sleeping at the time of the attack, but Kelly and Mrs Good were on the stairs when the hall became engulfed in a fireball.

The court was told that Heyworth had become obsessed after Janette's departure. On the night of the attack, he had attended a Masonic function at which his wife was working behind the bar. Later, when a card went round for guests to sign he wrote: "Fred Heyworth, single."

He later admitted to detectives that he lit the fire, although he claimed he could remember only going home to bed.

Firefighters, initially beaten back by the ferocity of the blaze, found the bodies of the four children in a back bedroom. The judge said the only comfort was that post-mortem examinations showed they had been killed by fumes rather than flames.

Neighbours had to prevent the distraught parents from trying to get back in the house as Beverly screamed for her children. She told police: "The children did not appear. I knew they weren't coming out. I have not got any enemies. I do not know who would want to hurt me and I know my children have never hurt anyone."

In a statement, Mr and Mrs Good and their daughters Kelly and Andrea said: "We are pleased that justice has been done. However, no punishment will ever be sufficient for the crime that has been committed. No sentence imposed would ever compensate or end the loss and suffering felt by us all."

Lecturers call for strikes over redundancies

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

University lecturers yesterday raised the spectre of campus strike action in protest at proposed redundancies of hundreds of staff.

An emergency motion passed by the Association of University Teachers at its annual conference in Scarborough yesterday called for protests including strike ballots in the worst-hit institutions.

Lecturers accused their employers of using a recent assessment of universities' research performance as a cover for job losses which, in reality, were prompted by funding cuts.

Vice-chancellors were using the Research Assessment Exercise to single out some staff as poor research performers and then target them for redundancy or early retirement, the union claimed.

Early indications of proposed job cuts in UK universities - 70 of which are expected to be operating at a deficit by the end of the century - suggest the sector is facing losses on a scale not seen for a decade, with some individual institutions contemplating dozens of redundancies.

Nottingham University has prompted outrage among its academic staff by compelling lecturers to submit research plans in order to select 50 candidates for redundancy.

In Wales, where funding per student is £329 per year less than in England, the University of Wales in Swansea has also met fierce opposition over proposals to axe 50 academic posts.

The AUT yesterday claimed that reducing staff on the basis of alleged poor research performance amounted to a "generalised witch hunt against academics".

It called on vice-chancellors to delay staff reviews until the publication of a report on the future of higher education by Sir Ron Dearing's committee of inquiry. The report, due in July, is expected to set out a blueprint for university funding, including a possible recommendation of tuition fees.

Nottingham University said it had offered to delay its redundancy programme, but the AUT had declined to discuss the issue. The Dearing report was about the future size and shape of higher education rather than solving an immediate restructuring problem, it said.

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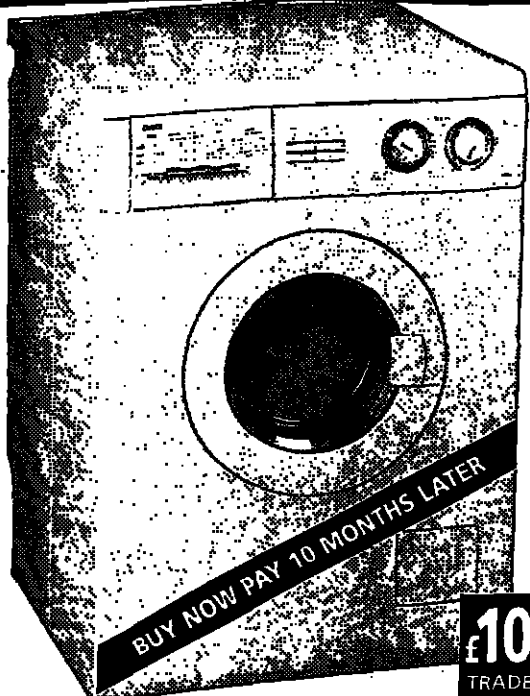


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مكتبة الرصين

Israelis launch airstrikes after three die in Lebanon

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

Guerrillas belonging to Hizbollah, the Islamic militant movement, killed three Israeli paratroopers and wounded seven in an ambush overnight just north of the zone held by Israeli forces in south Lebanon. In retaliation Israeli aircraft yesterday carried out 13 airstrikes and Israeli artillery fired 350 shells at Hizbollah targets.

The paratroop reconnaissance patrol was caught by surprise by the guerrillas, who opened fire at point blank range with machine guns and rocket propelled grenades near the village of Kiliyah less than two miles from the Israeli headquarters at Marjayoun. Israel said two guerrillas were killed. The clash brings to nine the number of Israeli troops killed in Lebanon this year and the number of wounded to 35. The

losses are not heavy, but they show that Hizbollah continues to be the most effective guerrilla force Israel has ever faced. Although the fighting started in reaction to an Israeli operation, it took place as the Shiah Muslim community in Lebanon, from which Hizbollah draws its support, celebrated the death in battle of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, in 680AD. Addressing a crowd of 75,000

people in Beirut, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the Hizbollah leader, said: "Any peace process that does not bring all of Palestine back to the Palestinians, all of the Golan Heights and all of south Lebanon, is an unfair peace process and a false one." The government of Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, has continued the policy in Lebanon of the previous Labour administration since it took office almost a year ago.

A unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the nine-mile-deep zone it holds in south Lebanon was advocated by some Israeli politicians after 73 Israeli soldiers were killed when two helicopters crashed into each other on the way to Lebanon in February. A further 27 Israeli soldiers were killed in action in Lebanon last year.

In the past senior officials, such as Dr Dore Gold, Mr Netanyahu's foreign affairs adviser, have advocated retaliating directly against Syrian positions in Lebanon after a Hizbollah attack. But Yitzhak Mordechai, the Defence Minister, and the army high command, are wary of further involvement in Lebanon. Last year the air and artillery bombardment of south Lebanon by Israel, known as Operation Grapes of Wrath, killed 200 Lebanese civilians, but failed to do any damage to Hizbollah.

Dennis Ross, the US peace envoy, has failed to break the stalemate in relations between Israel and the Palestinians and was scheduled to return to Washington yesterday after a nine-day-long shuttle mission in the Middle East. Talks were broken off two months ago after Israel started building a Jewish settlement at Jabal abu Gneim, a hilltop in the West Bank and called Har Homa by Israel. Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader,

rejected a proposal for a final meeting with Mr Ross, saying that he showed pro-Israeli bias. (Reuters) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman has cut off contact with Mr Netanyahu over his attitude towards a peacemaking crisis with the Palestinians, an Israeli newspaper reported. "I have cut all contact with him. Bibi isn't ready to listen. He knows everything," Yediot Ahronoth quoted Mr Weizman as saying.

German fury as Waigel 'cooks books'

Bonn plunders federal gold to meet Emu criteria

Inna Karacs
Bonn

The German government was accused of plunging the country into "unparalleled financial chaos" yesterday, as MPs vented their fury over Bonn's decision to rob the nation's piggy-bank.

Theo Waigel, the Finance Minister, was summoned to an emergency meeting in Parliament to explain his appalling miscalculation of public spending and the unorthodox remedy he was proposing.

Confronted with a hole of 18bn German marks (£6.5bn) in the state coffers, Mr Waigel plans to raid the Bundesbank's gold reserves, using the proceeds to cut the country's deficit to levels prescribed by the Maastricht treaty.

"Waigel has arrogantly accused other European countries of manipulating their budgets to meet the Maastricht criteria," said the Social Democrats' finance spokeswoman, Ingrid Matthäus-Maier. "Now he is pulling the same stunt."

Details of the plan, described by various opposition MPs as a "conjuring trick," a "sleight of hand" and a "gimmick," still remained hazy yesterday.

"You have not mentioned a single figure," Ms Matthäus-Maier complained. True, the only number uttered by Mr Waigel in his own defence was 50, the number of years it took the central bank to accumulate its wealth. So careful is the Bundesbank with its hoard, that most of the bullion is kept to this day in Britain and the United States, out of reach

of any potential invaders from the east.

"The financial stability of the Bundesbank will be safeguarded," Mr Waigel vowed. But, under his orders, the central bankers must revise the paper value of their bullion, and hand over the paper profit thus accrued to the bankrupt state.

Somewhere along the line in



Theo Waigel: 'Arrogant'

You are now world champion of creative book-keeping

this meandering journey, the fictitious sums will turn into real money, massaging government statistics just enough to allow Germany to slip into Economic and Monetary Union — Emu — through the back door.

The Finance Minister deserves to be pushed "out of a window for perpetrating such

accounting tricks," said Oswald Metzger, a Green MP.

Gregor Gysi, leader of the East German post-communists, put the manoeuvre in a different context: "When the GDR resorted to these methods, the end was night."

"You are now the world champion of creative book-keeping," Joschka Fischer, the Green leader, told Mr Waigel, adding that the German Finance Minister should set up shop in Palermo.

Outrage over Mr Waigel's daylight robbery was by no means limited to the voices of the left. Apart from the faithfully pro-government Bild, which could not contain its admiration for the "Waigel-Wunder" (Waigel miracle), conservative commentators were horrified.

Metaphors about Pandora's box, the Nibelung hoard, and other images flooded in as the press digested the implications. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine* lamented the sorry state of a country which has to take such "grotesque" measures to qualify for monetary union. Germany, "once one of the most advanced and modern industrialised nations, has to grab for the myth of a gold hoard," the paper wrote.

"This would be cooking the books," commented Wilhelm Hankel, a former senior economic advisor to the government.

"Any private company that manipulates its profit figures loses the confidence of the banks and its shares collapse. What the German government is proposing is no different."

Through gritted teeth, the Bundesbank has put out a terse statement, remarking on the gaping chasm in Mr Waigel's figures but omitting to comment on what he was planning to shovel into it. But the gnomes of Frankfurt must be hurting.

At one stroke, they have lost much of their independence, some of their loot, and, more importantly, their confidence in the future.

The euro will come, but the new coins will be softer as a result of the latest machinations, tainted with the Bundesbank's stolen gold. Described as also Germany's "clearest reputation. Never again will she be able to lay down the rules for honest book-keeping in Europe."



Flash-point: South Koreans fleeing during an anti-government rally in Seoul yesterday. Students have been rioting over the Hanbo scandal, in which the government is involved, and demanding President Kim's resignation. Photograph: AP

Kurd rebels flee as Turkish jets bomb camps in north Iraq

Osman Senkai
Reuters

On the Iraqi-Turkish border — Turkish forces solidified their hold on northern Iraq yesterday, but reports from the region suggested their quarry — separatist rebel Kurds — may have largely slipped their grasp.

Travellers crossing from Iraq said sounds of fighting at the start of the campaign against Kurdistan Workers party (PKK) fighters on Wednesday had given way to calm, amid tight security.

Earlier, aircraft jets flew dozens of bombing runs from Turkish bases against suspected camps of the PKK, which is waging a 12-year insurgency for autonomy or independence from Turkey. The incursion has been the biggest in two years, involving at least 10,000 troops.

With the return of relative calm, travellers said troops and *peshmarga* guerrillas from the main Iraqi Kurdish militia were manning checkpoints in and around the Iraqi border town of Zakho.

Truck drivers crossing into Turkey said local people were

angry that Massoud Barzani, head of Iraq's Kurdistan Democratic Party, was co-operating with the Turks to root out PKK bases.

"They have come again, with Barzani's support, but they will go home empty-handed," said one driver, summing up what he said was the mood of many Iraqis in the predominantly Kurdish north.

Others reported a big Turkish troop presence along the border with Syria, to the west of Zakho, apparently to block any attempt by the PKK to move in reinforcements or to mount hit-and-run raids.

There was a large number of soldiers between Zakho and the provincial capital Dohuk, and also around Sarsang, Ismailiye and Peshabur, the drivers said.

The anti-Baghdad Iraqi National Congress told Reuters that their contacts in the region indicated most of the PKK rebels had fled south, well out of range of Turkish patrols.

The incursion was carried out under a total "news black-out", with reporters barred from the area and calls blocked from



Erbakan: Army invited to help Iraqi Kurdish group fight PKK

Turkey to satellite telephones inside Iraq. Independent confirmation of casualty reports, as well as the full scope of operations, was impossible.

However, in a sign of growing confidence, the army reopened the border, closed since just before the attack, to deliveries of food and other supplies under United Nations auspices. Traders with Iraqi passports were also permitted to pass.

Military officials in Diyarbakir, headquarters for the anti-PKK fight, had earlier reported heavy fighting in the Sinjar Valley, east of Zakho.

They said one member of Turkey's Kurdish militia was killed and four were wounded in the clashes. State-paid village guards from the south-east often join the army on operations in Iraq.

The general staff said in a statement late on Thursday that 87 PKK rebels had been killed in Turkey's border provinces of Sirnak and Hakkari as they fled the Turkish advance from positions inside Iraq.

Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, an early advocate of a political solution to the PKK insurgency, said the army had been invited to help the biggest Iraqi Kurdish group in its own fight with the PKK. The Iraqi Kurds have yet to confirm this.

"One of the most important leaders in northern Iraq ... called upon our help while engaging in clashes with terrorist forces," he said. "Turkey is always respectful of Iraq's territorial integrity. This is a limited operation."

significant shorts

Chirac claims wide support for China policy

Six weeks after refusing to co-sponsor a United Nations resolution on China's human rights record, the French president, Jacques Chirac, wound up two days in Peking last night claiming that "most European countries" supported his policy of engagement rather than confrontation with Peking.

Unlike his American counterpart, Mr Chirac also said he had "no worries" about the future of Hong Kong under Chinese rule. "We are turning a new page here, and I think we are turning it very well," he added.

Mr Chirac hailed yesterday's Sino-French declaration on a new "global partnership" as the most important bilateral document signed between Paris and Peking since 1964. French businessmen travelling with the president signed deals including a \$1.5bn contract for Airbus Industrie. Mr Chirac applauded their "spirit of conquest". Teresa Poole — Peking

Parties row over Albanian poll

Albania's political parties were in bitter disagreement over the form of general elections due to be held next month, to the exasperation of the international mediator, Franz Vranitzky, who left the country after two days of talks warning that international aid for Albania might dry up if an accord was not reached soon.

After trying unsuccessfully to steamroll one electoral law through parliament earlier in the week, President Sali Berisha's Democratic Party approved a more conciliatory second one last night. However, this text ignored the other parties' key demand to increase the number of seats decided by proportional representation.

President Berisha wants to hold the elections on 29 June, but that date is looking increasingly optimistic as the wrangling continues and the opposition threatens a mass boycott. Andrew Gumbel

Ukraine underworld killing

The state property privatisation chief on Ukraine's Crimean peninsula was gunned down in what authorities said appeared to be an underworld contract killing.

Neighbours found Crimean State Property Fund director Alexei Golovizin lying in the corridor outside his apartment in Simferopol with three gunshot wounds. He died in hospital about 20 minutes later. AP — Simferopol

\$1.25m for legless burial

A Florida jury awarded \$1.25m (£780,000) to the family of an amputee who was buried without the legs she had entrusted to a funeral home for safekeeping years before her death.

The six-woman jury agreed that the Menorah Gardens and Funeral Chapels should pay \$1m in punitive damages and \$250,000 in compensatory damages for losing Molly Cohen's legs. Ms Cohen's legs were amputated in 1986 because of severe circulatory problems. In keeping with Orthodox Jewish tradition, she wanted to be buried whole. She asked the funeral home to arrange temporary burial of the legs, which were to be reburied with her when she died. Reuters — Fort Lauderdale

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Hong Kong's history men go for rewrite

Former governor denies that he pushed China into resuming sovereignty of colony

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

The pungent odour of correction fluid is drifting over Hong Kong as those who made British policy in the last years of colonial rule scramble to rewrite history and, in particular, to deflect responsibility for anything that might go wrong.

Two months before the return to Chinese rule, those responsible for early talks which led to the end of British sovereignty are denying they pushed China towards taking over. First in line is former governor Lord MacLehose who, more than any other governor, was responsible for Hong Kong's return. This week he gave an interview to the *South China Morning Post*, claiming he was not responsible for making China take a stand on the return of Hong Kong during his meeting with China's paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, in 1979.

After remaining silent on the subject for six years, much of the interview was taken up by an attack on an article written by this reporter, published in 1991. That article revealed the clumsy manner in which Lord MacLehose and colleagues first raised Hong Kong's future.

Lord MacLehose, then the first governor to meet any senior Chinese leader, raised with Mr Deng the issue of commercial leases in the New Territories which were due to run out in 1997 along with the lease given for the greater part of Hong Kong's land-mass. He said investors were worried and intended to propose an arrangement to be made for extending the commercial leases without raising the sovereignty issue.

China crisis: Ex-governor Lord MacLehose (top); Sir Percy Cradock, the mandarin's mandarin; and Governor Chris Patten

No notice had been given to the Chinese that the issue was to be raised. Deng deliberately misunderstood the difference between the commercial leases and the treaty with Britain over the New Territories or was incensed by what he saw as a suggestion of denying China's sovereign right to Hong Kong. He launched into a monologue asserting China's right to resume control over Hong Kong, and laid down many of the conditions since set in stone.

Lord MacLehose now says: "It wasn't me who mentioned [the resumption of sovereignty]

first: it was Deng Xiaoping." This is technically correct but avoids the issue of whether Britain forced China's hand.

A former Chinese official has also broken silence and indirectly confirmed the account of events in my 1991 report. Wong Man-fong, a former deputy secretary of China's *de facto* embassy in Hong Kong, told a seminar this month that until the meeting with Lord MacLehose "we thought of bypassing the 1997 issue by declaring Hong Kong an historic problem which the two governments would discuss at an appropriate time". China was

thinking of "extending British rule for another 30 to 50 years" but "they didn't give us a way to step down".

In his interview Lord MacLehose says: "The amount ... written about that by people who know nothing about it is quite extraordinary." Since he now publicly denies the accuracy of my account, which was partly based on information which he gave me during an unattributable interview in 1991, he presumably no longer wishes to have his anonymity preserved. Moreover, his recollections then match those of three of the four other British and Hong

Kong representatives at the meeting who were interviewed for the article at that time.

Lord MacLehose says he had to raise the leases issue because, if he had not discussed it, a legal vacuum would have ensued. This had been taken up by Sir Percy Cradock, the Foreign Office mandarin at the centre of Sino-British relations for two decades and who, more than his political masters, was responsible for policy which led to the handover of Hong Kong. He finished his governmental career as the prime minister's main foreign-policy adviser and in 1991 was re-

sponsible for pushing John Major into a position where Britain again found itself abasing itself before the Chinese leaders.

He made a secret mission to Peking to lay the ground for Mr Major's ill-fated visit in 1991, the first by a major Western leader after the Tiananmen Square massacre. The purpose was to clear the logjam over Hong Kong. In his memoirs Sir Percy bails this as a success.

But Mr Major was persuaded to make the trip against his better judgement. He appeared to be vindicated, because the logjam merely moved in another

direction. China viewed the visit as a victory, as it signalled the end of diplomatic isolation which followed the Tiananmen crackdown.

Sir Percy is making a second career criticism of Mr Major's appointed Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, for failing to assume Britain's customary kowtow position in dealings with China. His argument is that Mr Patten, fully backed by the Major government, caused unnecessary trouble by fiddling with plans to create more representative government. According to Sir Percy, if the old line had been adhered to, Hong

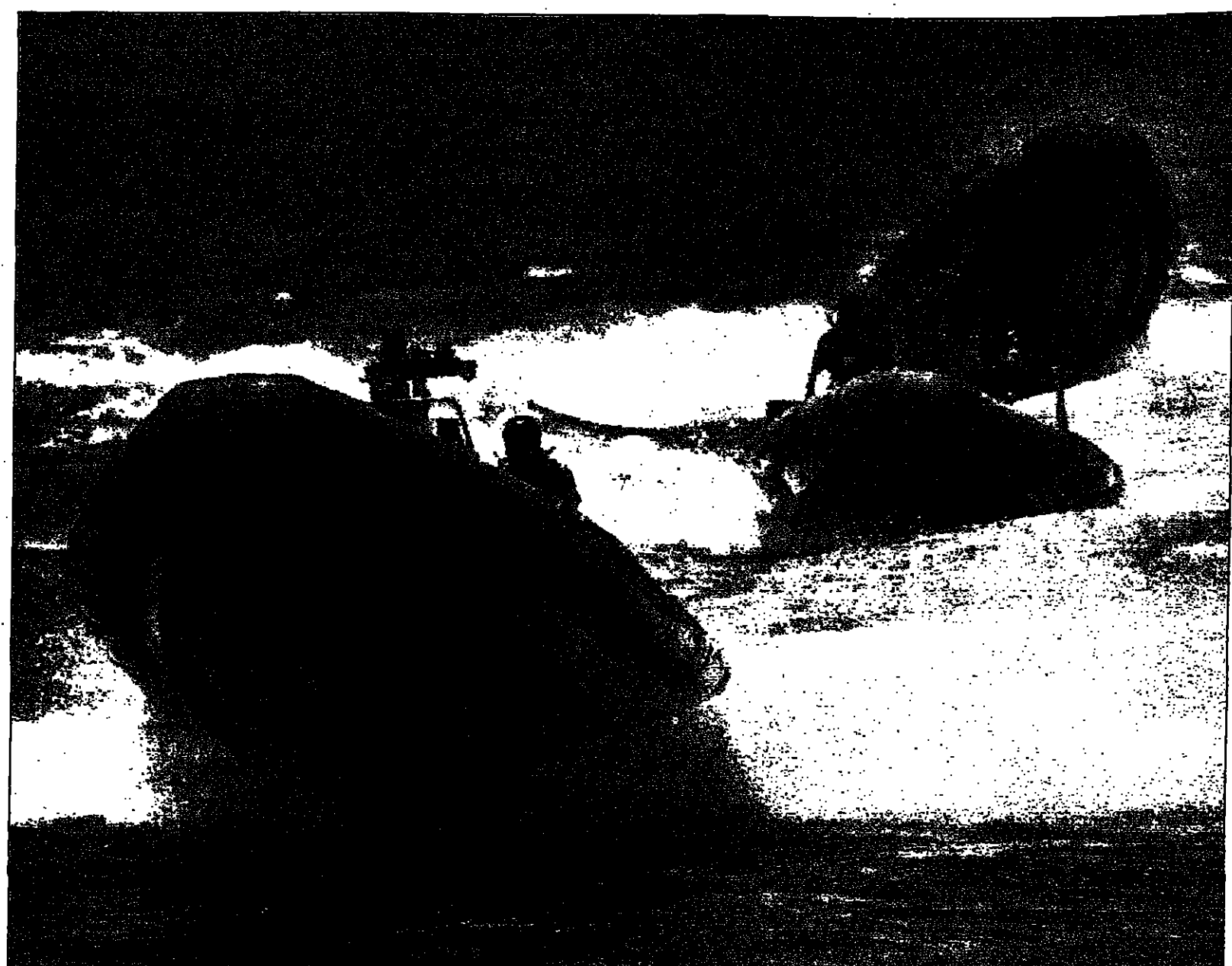
Kong would be enjoying a smoother transition. This ignores the fact that the real deterioration in relations with China occurred during the governorship of one of Sir Percy's disciples, Lord Wilson, who was in charge at the time of Tiananmen. He could not help but reflect Hong Kong fears and concerns and was punished by China for doing so.

Fresh supplies of correction fluid will no doubt be arriving at the homes of other former British participants in the Hong Kong débacle in the months to come. Blame avoidance is clearly the order of the day.

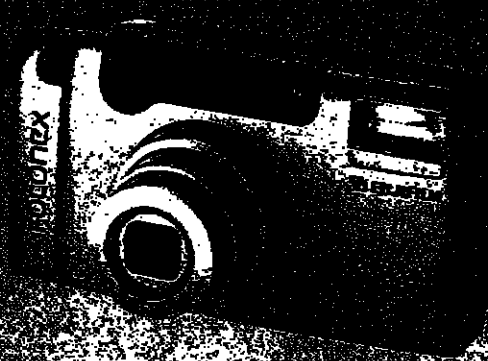
Bay watch: Colonial police show their skills after the first joint exercise by Hong Kong and Chinese forces to curb illegal immigrants from China
Photograph: AP

The beat goes on for British troops

Hong Kong (Reuters) — The British Army yesterday packed up its radio station — literally into a container. The British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) plans to stay on the air until the last moment before the handover but not from its old studio in military headquarters. In an informal ceremony to the tones of a bagpiper, Commodore Peter Melson, chief of staff of British forces in the territory, declared the new BFBS station open in a 20-foot container, replete with disc-jockey, studio equipment and sound-proof walls. "It works!" Commodore Melson declared as he stepped out of the container, commissioned for use in Saudi Arabia during the 1991 Gulf war, after a token inspection. A staff of 15 who used to occupy two proper studios at the barracks will keep the station going until the handover, although "the shack", as it is called by its users, itself will be loaded on to the supply and troop ship *Sir Percival* on 29 June.



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مكتبة من الاصل

The President departs: Zaire's leader leaves behind a bitter nation ruthlessly stripped of all its wealth over 32 years



Mobutu: Ransacked homeland

Photograph: Reuters

Mary Braid
Kinshasa

There is a story about Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko which sums up the arrogance and gall required to ransack your homeland and not lose a night's sleep. In an interview on American television the President was asked about the size of his personal fortune. Could he personally pay off his country's multi-billion dollar debt? President Mobutu answered that theoretically that was possible - but how could he be sure he would ever get his money back?

Today Zaireans will be asking themselves just that question once the reality of the President's departure has sunk in. How can they ever recover the billions stolen from the nation?

In the end, President Mobutu went with a whimper not a bang. The man who vowed to see off the rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, sneaked out of Kinshasa airport, bound for his lavish palace in Gbadolite, northern Zaire - in his tribal homeland

- with only a few generals and soldiers as witnesses.

At first the government insisted he had packed just a weekend bag. But Western diplomats said Gbadolite was just a stop over on a flight into exile that would take him first to Morocco and then onto Villa Del Mar, his £3.2m home at Cap Martin on the French Riviera.

His decision finally to relinquish the affairs of state was made public only seven hours later. It came after the generals and senior ministers laid it on the line.

They could no longer guarantee his safety. And with Laurent Kabila's rebels poised to take Kinshasa - as the climax to an astonishing seven-month military campaign in which they had seized most of the country - they could not promise to defend the capital.

"It's the best thing for Zaire and offers the best chance of a peaceful transition," said one relieved Western diplomat yesterday, after weeks of international pressure on President Mobutu to step down.

In the streets of the capital

Mobutu takes the money and runs to a safe haven

they could not quite believe that the man who bled Zaire dry for 32 years had finally gone. The past two weeks had been filled with rumours of his resignation. Each trip from the country was said to be his last.

The city remained calm in the main. Everyone is waiting, as they have been for months, for Mr Kabila. "For us," said Joseph, a beaming street vendor "it can only get better."

But in the darker corners of Kinshasa, a few scores were being settled. Members of Snip

President Mobutu's hated secret police, were being cornered. Mr Mobutu's Zaire required terror as well as political cunning to function.

"I have had a call from a friend who was in the secret police who is being chased all over the city by six men," said a local businessman. What could he expect when they caught him? "Death, or a beating depending on what they think he has done."

At the city's finest hotel, the Intercontinental, Zairean businessmen continued to check in

with their families. "Their houses have been attacked," said a hotel insider. "Many are just waiting to catch the ferry to Brazzaville."

At the main ferry to Brazzaville heavily armed Zairean soldiers were under the command of a man in dark glasses, leather jacket and jeans. "Forget about the documents," said the port official, long converted to President Mobutu's ways. "We can deal with all that for a price."

At the city's small private har-

bour there was a queue for the minority who have reason to run. Journalists were threatened with arrest; the harbour's customers, in expensive cars, were shy of publicity. It was almost impossible to get rich in Mobutu's Zaire without contamination and corruption.

At the Central Bank long-suffering civil servants, unpaid for months, were queuing in the hope of some wages, even in worthless Zairean currency, before the coming change. But the bank's gates remained shut.

For 32 years President Mobutu has treated Zaire like a toy and used its rich mineral reserves like his own private bank account. He plundered its mines, insisting their entire annual profits be transferred to personal accounts overseas.

In the beginning his country stood still, then as the infrastructure left by the Belgians in 1960 after independence began to crumble from neglect. Zaire began slowly to implode. In the end the Zairean state was just Mobutu; and its gross national product was just pocket money for him and a vast network of cronies. President Mobutu turned the country into a gangster's paradise where only those in the mob could prosper. He kept friends close and enemies even closer. All patronage eventually flowed from him.

"We had to be close to the regime to do business," admitted Mohammed Abdul, a Lebanese businessman yesterday as he fortified his shop for an expected pre-Kabila pillage by Zaire's ruthless and brutal army. The Lebanese are hated by Zaireans who believe they

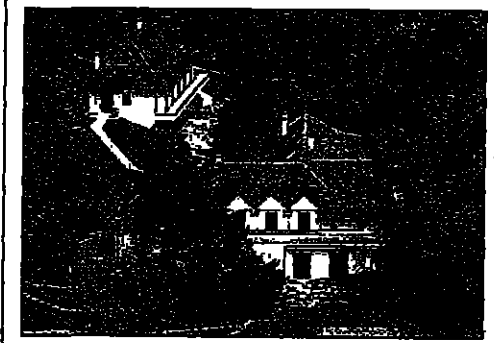
colluded with President Mobutu to plunder the country's diamonds.

The United States and West are also despised, standing by while a nation suffered three decades of assault and robbery. During the war years they turned a blind eye to President Mobutu's excesses because he was seen as a buffer against the spread of communism in Africa, and particularly in neighbouring Angola. Only when the cold war ended did human rights matter. But by then President Mobutu had amassed a fortune and Zaire was spent.

Villa Del Mar is just one of 20 luxury properties owned by Mr Mobutu and his family around the world. The Zairean President has built up an overseas business empire from his spoils.

At the city's Parliament yesterday a deputy raged at Mobutu's easy departure. "I want him here," he frothed, on the steps of the vast soulless building constructed by the Chinese. "I want Mobutu humiliated. He should not be allowed to just walk away."

Swiss seize luxury 30-room villa



BERN, Switzerland (AP) — Just hours before the announcement that Mobutu Sese Seko was giving up his powers, the Swiss government said that it was seizing a villa near Lake Geneva which belonged to the beleaguered President.

The 30-room Villa les Miquettes in Savigny, east of Lausanne, is the only significant asset so far identified as belonging to Mr Mobutu. He inherited the five-hectare estate from his mother in

1978. The villa has an annexe, with two separate apartments and a swimming pool. The grounds are surrounded by tall trees.

There was growing opposition in Switzerland to Mr Mobutu's presence. After he left for France last November, the Swiss government refused to issue him a new visa for follow-up medical treatment on grounds that a visit to Switzerland was no longer medically necessary.

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earn mileage points that count towards higher status in any of their frequent flyer programmes. Wouldn't it be great if you could enjoy the same high standards of service whenever and wherever you fly. That's the idea behind Star Alliance,SM a network of SAS, Air Canada, Lufthansa, THAI, and United Airlines. A fundamental

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Le train now arriving is cheap, efficient and smells wonderful

PARIS DAYS

The French railways have produced an entertaining leaflet, which shows the Eurostar route through the Channel tunnel as an oversized Métro/Tube line linking the underground systems of London and Paris.

If this fantasy is ever to be realised – boarding the Tube at Piccadilly, and alighting at Charles de Gaulle-Etoile – one hopes, for humanitarian reasons, that the trains will be run from the French end.

As a once daily victim of the London Underground, now removed to Paris, I wish to pay a glowing tribute to the Métro. It is clean; efficient; safe; frequent; cheap; and rarely breaks down. It also has that wonderful smell – a blend of sweat, perfume and burned rubber – which has defined Paris to generations of foreign visitors, as much as, say, the view of the Eiffel Tower.

My problem is that I can find few Parisians who agree with me about the Métro. They are convinced that their underground system is dirty, inefficient, expensive and dangerous. In other words, despite the Eurostar, few of them have been to London recently.

This is a perfect example of a French tendency to protest too much. The French have some reasons to be anxious about their future but not as many as

they think they have. They have some reasons to be sour about the Métro – for instance, a tendency for bombs to explode in its younger, bigger, dirtier sister, the RER regional network – but not as many as they believe they have.

On my nightly struggle home in London, it was a common experience to wait 20 minutes for a Wimbledon branch train on a menacingly crowded platform at Earls Court; or to wait in tunnels three or four times on one journey.

In four and a half months in Paris, I can remember stopping between stations only once, and that on a day when the Métro line 6 was "perturbed" by industrial action. In daytime, you generally wait no more than two or three minutes for a Métro train. Late at night, you wait ten minutes, at most.

It costs eight francs, less than 90p, for a single journey, anywhere within the city of Paris, broadly equivalent to zones one and two of the London Tube system, where a single journey costs £1.50. If you buy a carnet of 10 tickets, as most Parisians do, the cost falls to Fr4.60 a trip – around 50p. A monthly ticket in Paris costs Fr243 (£26.40), compared to £60.30 for zones one and two in London.

How does the Métro do it?

It starts with some advantages. The Métro (leaving aside the RER) is a denser network than the Tube and does not reach out as far into the suburbs. As a purely urban system, it is more intensively used – five million passengers a day, seven million

economics are confusing but instructive. The public subsidy for each tube journey in London is around 35 per cent (and falling). The public subsidy for each Métro journey is 50 per cent. Thus the real cost of the £1.50 single tube journey is around

'The French are convinced their Métro is dirty and dangerous'

including the RER, compared to 2.5 million on the Tube – which reduces the cost of carrying each passenger. Since the Métro was built later than the Tube (its first line opened in 1900), and has fewer deep tunnels, it is structurally cheaper to maintain. Beyond that, the Métro

£2.35 (based on figures supplied by London Transport). The real cost of the 88p single Métro journey is £1.76 and the real cost of a 50p carnet ticket is £1. In other words, the Métro is not only efficient; it is genuinely good value. The RATP, unlike other state-run operations, such

as the main-line railway system, is not a licensee for tearing up franchises. It faces, none the less, demands for new "efficiencies".

As France struggles to reduce its budget deficits to qualify for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), all public services are being squeezed, including the Métro. Some of the clever young men in the Finance Ministry have started to ask if it might not be possible for passengers to wait three or four minutes for a train instead of two.

Journeys were still about 5 per cent down last year on pre-bomb-and-strike levels of 1994. Parisians are turning more to their cars, to taxis, even to bikes.

There is an element of snobbery here: even racism. You hear better-off Parisians say that they never use the Métro any more: it is unsafe and un-

clean. By this, they seem to mean that there are more brown and black faces down there than they see at street level. Robberies and assaults on the Métro are, in reality, rare. (The RER, which links Paris with some of the poorer banlieues, is a different matter.)

Surveys and anecdotal experience suggest that Parisians are also offended by the intensive panhandling which afflicts the Métro. On one short journey I made this week, there was an almost choreographed French force of entries and exits. At consecutive stations, three panhandlers got on and off through different doors, giving the same rather formal speech beginning: "Excusez-moi de vous déranger, mesdames, messieurs, mais..." No one else on the train found this funny.

All three were trying to sell the same small booklet, produced by the French equivalent of the *Big Issue*. It turned out to be a well-written guide to the history and meaning of the station names on the Paris Métro.

Partly drawn from this publication, here is a brief quiz. Which two stations on the London Tube have the same names as stations on the Paris Métro?

Answer: 1. Temple (District and Circle line and Métro line 3); 2. Arsenal (Piccadilly line and Métro line 5). The second, I admit, is a cheat. The Parisian Arsenal station, next to Bastille, closed in 1939.

If you got one station right, you win a ticket on the first through Métro train to Wimbledon.

John Lichfield

Clinton meets Tuskegee victims

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

President Clinton yesterday made a formal apology on behalf of successive US administrations for what is seen as one of the most shameful episodes in 20th century American history: the use of impoverished black syphilis victims for a 40-year medical experiment.

Five of the eight survivors, aged between 90 and 100, travelled to Washington from Tuskegee, Alabama, where the experiment was conducted, to attend the White House ceremony. People in Tuskegee were able to watch a special satellite relay.

The research project began in 1932 and involved 400 black men whose syphilis was deliberately left untreated, even though penicillin became available as the study progressed. It was not halted until 1972, following an exposé by the Associated Press news agency.

The men were not told they had syphilis and knew their disease as "bad blood". The study was intended to track the passage of syphilis and its effects on the body. The men, all poor, had signed up for a federally funded medical care programme.

AP established that 28 had died of syphilis, another 100 from syphilis-related complications and at least 40 wives and 19 children had been infected.

Now, more than 25 years after the experiment ended, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study is identified as an episode that has strained race relations in the US and fostered black cynicism of white authority, including whites in the medical profession.

Yesterday's ceremony at the White House fulfilled a promise made by Mr Clinton two months ago that he would apologise in person to the victims. They and their families have received financial compensation, but never an apology.

Mr Clinton used the occasion to announce that the government was giving \$200m (£125m) to help fund a bioethics research centre at Tuskegee University.



Up and running: A Métro train travels overland to cross the Bir Hakeim bridge by the Eiffel Tower in Paris

ange in business travel. And these benefits are just beginning. We will be offering even more in the months ahead. We know you have a lot of choices when it comes to flying, and we're making sure Star Alliance is always the best choice. After all, there's no better way in the world to get around the world.

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Sir John Eccles

Sir John Eccles was pre-eminent as a neurophysiologist whose life was devoted to unravelling the secrets of the central nervous system. To this task he brought a brilliant intellect, enormous energy and formidable stamina. He transformed our understanding of the detailed cellular interactions among nerve cells in the nervous system, though the task he set himself of understanding the human mind eluded him, as indeed it has many others.

He was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1903. His father was a school teacher. Eccles read Medicine at Melbourne University and had a meteoric academic career gaining a first class degree and winning a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. Here he completed his academic training in Sir Charles Sherrington's Department of Physiology, adding an MA and a D Phil to his attainments, plus an Oar—a sporting trophy in the arcane game of chasing boats and gaining bumps. He also won the Gotch and Rolleston Prizes, a Research Fellowship at Exeter College, a Fellowship at Magdalen and a lectureship at Oxford University—all in the space of 12 years.

At Oxford, his lifelong preoccupation with the nervous system began to unfold. The most notable early result was a sequence of scientific papers on hind-limb withdrawal reflexes, published in 1930-31 with Sherrington. Eccles seems rather quickly to have decided that the connections between nerve cells held an important clue to the operation of the brain, and the synapse (a term coined by Sherrington in 1903 to describe these connections) held his attention thereafter.

The Physiological Society at their regular meeting in the 1930s then witnessed the battle between Eccles, promoting the electrical hypothesis for synaptic transmission, and Sir Henry Dale, Wilhelm Feldberg and Martha Vogt, who championed the subsequently fully confirmed hypothesis of chemical transmission. The youthful (Sir) Alan Hodgkin had in 1937 published his crucial results establishing that the conduction of impulses along a nerve fibre depend-

ed on the flow of electricity in the nerve at the front of the impulse and Eccles took the view that such an event also enabled communication across the synapse.

At Oxford in 1927 he had married Irene ("Rene") Miller, a New Zealander, by whom he had four sons and five daughters. In 1937 he took his young family back to Australia. He became the Director of the Kanematsu Memorial Institute of Pathology in Sydney, where his professional responsibilities lay in providing a clinical pathology service. In this unlikely setting he put together an electrophysiological laboratory, recruited among others the biophysicist (Sir) Bernard Katz and the neurobiologist Stephen Kuffler, and continued work on



Eccles: 'Synaptic Jack'

neuromuscular transmission. During the Second World War he directed a blood replacement unit supplying operations in the Pacific.

His next move was to the Physiology Department of Otago University, in Dunedin, New Zealand (1944-51), where he developed a sustained attack on the excitatory and inhibitory transmission in the spinal cord of the cat. His obsession with his research in this rather arid environment overflowed into his undergraduate lectures, and earned him the sobriquet "Synaptic Jack" given by irreverent students. Among his lasting contributions was the inception of advanced undergraduate and postgraduate courses in physiology and the launching of students (including his daughter Rosamund) on

their scientific careers in New Zealand and abroad. At this time he was still actively promoting the hypothesis of electrical transmission at nerve synapses in the spinal cord, basing his conclusions on the use of extracellular recording methods.

A crucial episode in the development of his ideas came from the introduction to the department by A.K. McIntyre, his successor as head of department, of a new technology—the hollow, electrolyte-filled, glass micro-electrode, which made it possible to make intracellular recordings of the activity of individual spinal nerve cells in situ. This revolution in technology came from J. Graham and R.W. Gerard in the United States. When the device appeared in his department, Eccles with characteristic insight and vigour promptly applied it to his experiments. He had already fully exploited the monosynaptic reflex pathway, and was able to use electrical stimulation of a muscle nerve to excite only nerve fibre with monosynaptic connections to large motor neurones in the spinal cord. By these means he was able to control in a very precise and necessary way the sensory input to these neurones.

He had also cornered the world's stock of Lucas pendulums (pre-electronic electro-mechanical instruments designed about 1910) and with these high-precision mechanical devices could deliver electrical stimuli to peripheral nerves at intervals less than 1 millisecond, which was necessary to cope with the speed at which events occur in the central nervous system. The results of inserting his recording electrode into a motor neurone led to the falsification of his electrical hypothesis. This caused him no problem since he had proved himself wrong, and it also rescued him from a cul-de-sac in which he was in danger of entrapping himself. Both excitatory and inhibitory transmission then became explicable in terms of chemical synaptic transmission.

His abrupt conversion from electrical to chemical transmission was revealed to an assemblage of physiological world at a meeting of the Physiological

Society in London in 1951. In 1963 these studies earned him the award of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, jointly with Sir Alan Hodgkin and Sir Andrew Huxley.

In 1951 Eccles had moved to the Chair of Physiology at the Australian National University in Canberra, at first to temporary hutted accommodation. There he built up a world-renowned research group, attracting gifted young investigators not only from Australia but from all four corners of the world. A veritable flood of research papers on the neurophysiology of the spinal cord and on transmitter substances in the central nervous system overwhelmed the scientific press, leading incidentally to the setting up in 1963 of a new journal, *Experimental Brain Research*. While at Canberra Eccles was instrumental in creating the Australian Academy of Science, modelled on the Royal Society of London, and was its President from 1957 to 1961.

In 1966, faced with prospect of mandatory retirement from the ANU, he uprooted himself and left Australia for the United States, never to return, not even to accept a medal from the Australian Neuroscience Society. At the Institute of Biomedical Research in Chicago, he rebuilt his research career, concentrating now on the brain, particularly the cerebellum. Subsequently he moved to the State University of New York at Buffalo. In 1968 he married Helena Táboriková, a research colleague in his Canberra days. After seven years at Buffalo he retired as a Distinguished Professor Emeritus to live and write books at Ca la Gra in the Swiss Ticino, where he maintained an active liaison with former research colleagues.

Eccles always questioned the relation between our bodies and our minds, and especially the link between brain structures/processes and mental dispositions. He had known and been influenced by (Sir) Karl Popper in New Zealand and in 1974 they had the opportunity to spend a month at the Villa Serbelloni on Lake Como, engaged in a scientific dialogue. The result, *The Self and Its*

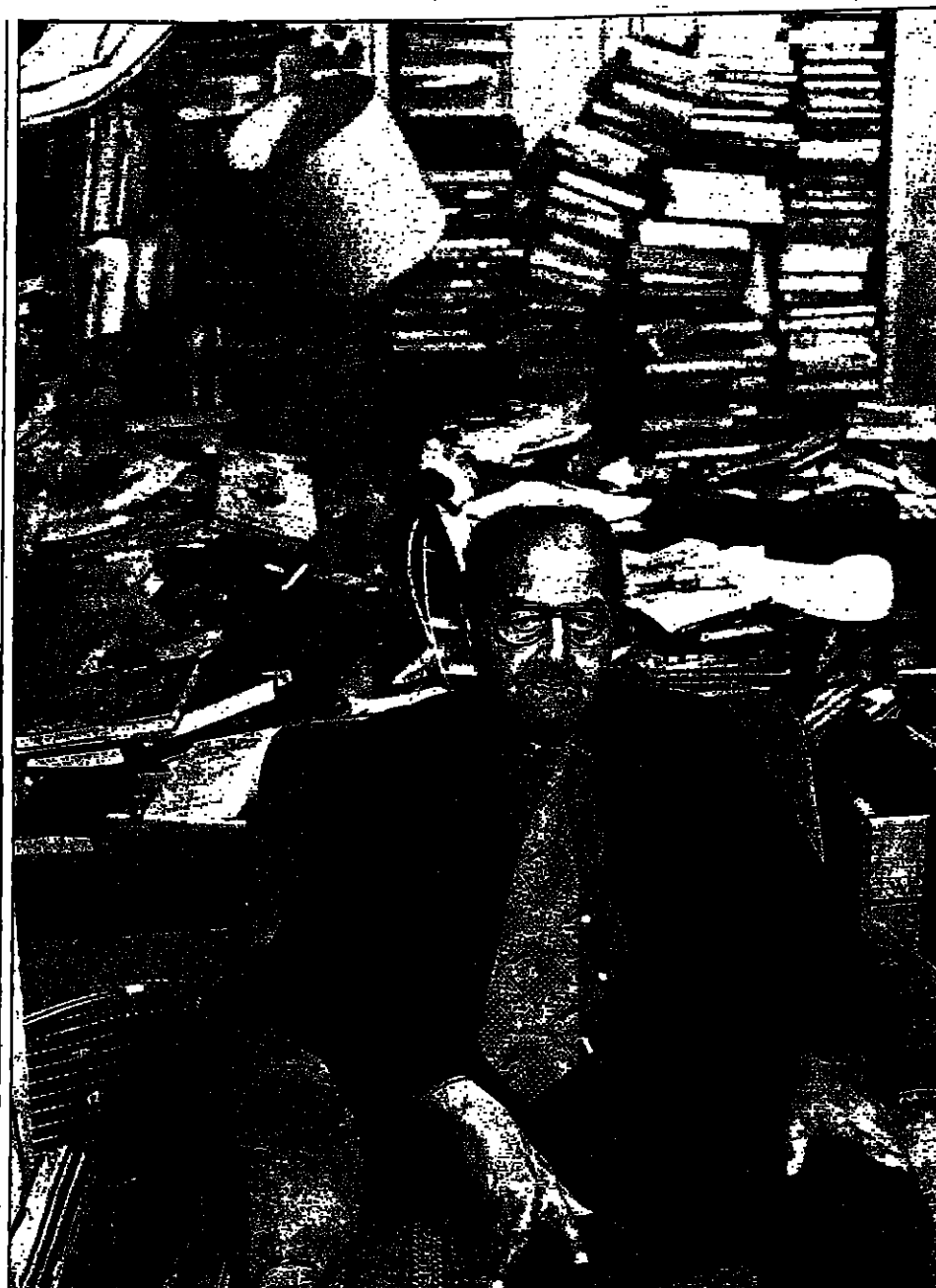
Brain (1977) is a searching enquiry by "an agnostic philosopher" (Popper) and "a believer in God and the supernatural" (Eccles), actuated by the need to account for the human mystery from their standpoint of a dualism of mind and body. In conclusion, Popper said "So we leave it at that" and, one might add, to the future.

A prolific author of original research articles he also found time to write seminal books, sometimes based on invited public lectures, including *The Neurophysiological Basis of Mind* (1953), *The Physiology of Nerve Cells* (1957), *Sherrington, His Life and Thought* (1979), jointly with William C. Gibson, *The Human Mystery* (1979). He also delivered prestigious lectures, such as the Waynflete (Magdalen College, Oxford), Ferrier (Royal Society), Sherrington (Liverpool University), and Gifford (Edinburgh University).

A formidable and devastating adversary in debate John Eccles nevertheless had many loyal friends among his numerous research colleagues and associates, some of whom celebrated his 90th birthday at a memorable symposium at the Max Planck Institute in Germany.

Almsley Iggo

John Carew Eccles, neurophysiologist: born Melbourne, Australia 27 January 1903, Junior Research Fellow, Exeter College, Oxford 1927-32, Staines Medical Fellow 1932-34, Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen College, Oxford and University Lecturer in Physiology 1934-37; Director, Kanematsu Memorial Institute of Pathology, Sydney 1937-44; FRGS 1941; Professor of Physiology, Australian National University, Canberra 1951-66; KJ 1958; (jointly) Nobel Prize for Medicine 1963; Member, Institute for Biomedical Research, Chicago 1966-68; Distinguished Professor and Head of Research Unit of Neurobiology, State University of New York at Buffalo 1968-75 (Emeritus); AC 1990; married 1928 Irene Miller (four sons and five daughters; marriage dissolved 1968); 1968 Helena Táboriková; died Locarno, Switzerland 2 May 1997.



Baquero: 'seated in his armchair, as if on a throne... the best kind of Cuban' Gorka Lejarcegi / El Pais

Gaston Baquero

Gaston Baquero, one of Cuba's most important poets, spent nearly 40 years in exile in Spain, and only in recent years did his native country begin to accord him the recognition, after decades of disappointing silence.

Baquero, a reserved man, was a distinguished representative of a group of Cuban intellectuals that grew up in the 1940s around the literary review *Orígenes*. But he left Cuba following the 1959 revolution and was henceforth airbrushed from history by supporters of Fidel Castro. His work was expurgated from Havana University's literature syllabus and from the island's literary anthologies and dictionaries.

Ernesto Che Guevara commented acidly: "He saw clearly that the revolution was going to be like and fled to Franco's tranquil beaches." But rather than lull in the sun, Baquero led a secluded life in a smart quarter of Madrid, in an apartment crisscrossed with books from floor to ceiling, barely known outside a small circle of Spanish poets and poetry aficionados.

Ten days before he died, a group of Spanish poets held a round table discussion in his honour at the Fine Arts Club in Madrid at which the poet Francisco Brines said: "the poetry of Baquero reinvents the astonished and innocent gaze of a child, in which unexpected images and his sensory abundance produce constant happy surprises."

Not until 1995 was a two-volume collection of Baquero's work published in Spain. A year earlier, the University of Salamanca devoted a special issue of

its literary review to him. This coincided with the appearance of a few of his poems in a journal in Havana, the first feeble rays of light to penetrate the oblivion into which he had been cast.

The critic Roger Salas, a friend of the poet and himself a Cuban exile, wrote yesterday in *El País*: "Baquero navigated all his life in a deep and agitated sea of images, those that clothed his exquisite poetic work. In his Madrid home it was difficult to walk amidst such narrow passages and mountains of the written word. Seated in his armchair, as if on a throne, the poet, the best kind of Cuban, could spin a conversation from any subject... with reserved humour and irony."

Born into a poor family in Banes, Oriente province, Baquero studied agronomy at Havana University, but swiftly decided to devote his life to poetry and journalism. He said years later he had been inspired by a chance reading, in 1939, of a poem by José Lezama Lima, whom he greatly admired.

He and a clutch of like-minded poets, including Lima, were associated with the review *Orígenes*, the flagship of Cuban culture in the 1940s. Baquero's first book, *Prenas*, was published in 1942 followed by *Saul sobre la espada* ("Saul on the Sword"), a few months later. His standing as a poet became established with his long verses and rich aquatic images in works like "Testamento del pez" ("The fish's testament").

Between 1947 and 1959 he was an intellectual grandee of Havana, tall, dark-skinned and el-

egant, an influential columnist and editor on the conservative daily *Diario de la Marina*. He became powerful and rich, owned a splendid house filled with books and paintings, and won many prizes. He was also Catholic, sybaritic and homosexual. He feared detention the moment Castro's forces came to power and, protected by four ambassadors who escorted him to the airport, flew into exile.

Overnight he swapped popular celebrity for virtual anonymity. In 1960, when he was working shamefacedly in Radio Exterior de España, he published "Poems written in Spain", and in 1961 a little collection of essays "Hispanic American writers today" in which he praised a promising unknown young Colombian, Gabriel García Márquez.

In 1966 he published his best and most original book of poems *Memorial de un testigo* ("Memorial of a witness"), full of singing, disturbing language, imaginary legends and confessions of his secret heart. Spanish poets who admired him published his collected work in 1985 under the title *Mágicas e invenciones* ("Magics and inventions").

There followed *Poemas Invisibles* and two volumes of essays, *Indios, blancos y negros en el caldero de América* ("Indians, whites and blacks in the cauldron of America") in 1991 and, in 1995, *La fuente inagotable* ("The inexhaustible source").

Elizabeth Nash

Gaston Baquero, poet and essayist: born Banes, Cuba 4 May 1918; died Madrid 15 May 1997.

Emily Hahn

"I have deliberately chosen the uncertain path whenever I had the choice... A more important freedom was that which made it possible to travel," wrote Emily Hahn in *China to Me* (1944).

In 1930, after making some money from her first book, *Seduction ad Absurdum: the principles and practices of seduction* (1930), Hahn went to Africa, "young and impulsive, because I'd always wanted to". She was in the Belgian Congo, living with the pygmies in the Itari Forest, when she discovered that Britain had gone off the gold standard and the money she was expecting from England had become devalued. Undeterred she remained in Africa, staying with an anthropologist and reading his library which was limited to African exploration, until one day the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* arrived, by canoe, in two huge packing cases. This enforced stay suited her. "I have always preferred reading to work."

She wrote out her Congo ex-

periences as fact in *Congo Solo: misadventures two degrees north* (1933) and as fiction in *With Naked Feet* (1934). She returned to Africa in the 1950s and again in the 1960s drawn by the same feeling expressed by Pliny: "There is always something new from Africa."

"Mickey" Hahn was born in 1905 in St Louis, Missouri; her father was a hardware salesman and her mother a suffragette. She and her siblings were brought up to be independent and to think for themselves and she became the first woman to take a degree in mining engineering from the University of Wisconsin. She went on to study mineralogy at Columbia and anthropology at Oxford, working in between as an oil geologist, a teacher and a guide in New Mexico before she arrived in New York where she took up writing seriously. Letters that she had written to her brother-in-law were published in the *New Yorker* in 1929 and she continued to write for the magazine, under four different editors, on a va-

riety of topics until a few weeks before her death.

In 1935 she travelled to China for a short visit and ended up by staying nine years in the Far East. She loved living in Shanghai and met both Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai, eventually writing a biography of the Soong sisters, published in 1941. She became the lover of Zou Taofen, an intellectual, whom she particularly liked for his overwhelming curiosity about everything, she felt it rubbed off on her, and together they founded the English-language magazine *Candid Comment*.

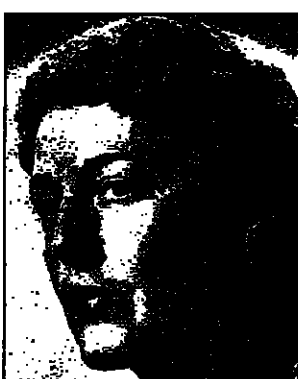
She maintained that where she lived was unimportant to her: "I don't pay attention to my surroundings. I really don't. I don't bother." Perhaps it was to satisfy her maternal instinct that one day when she saw a gibbon, Mr Mills, in the Shanghai Pet Store she went home, having bought him, in a state of "hysterical happiness". During her time in China she learned to smoke opium, persisting for two years until, inevitably, she

became addicted; she was then cured by a hypnotist.

China to Me is a vivid, readable and a fascinating social document of the time. Hahn wrote it in just five weeks.

In Hong Kong Hahn met Major Charles R. Boxer, a married British intelligence officer; in 1940 she became pregnant and they had a daughter, Carla. Boxer was captured by the Japanese after being wounded in the attack on Hong Kong. Hahn visited him as much as possible in his prisoner-of-war camp, until she and Carla were repatriated to the United States in 1943. On his release they got married and in 1946 they arrived in Dorset where she called herself a "bad housewife" since, in reply to his concern about money, she said: "Then let's not spend money on anything else, except books."

Although Boxer continued to live in England, where he became Professor of Portuguese at London University, Hahn lived mostly in America as a tax exile. This remarkable woman wrote about 60 books on a



Hahn: preferred reading to work

wide range of subjects: biographies of people as diverse as Mary Queen of Scots, Aphra Behn, Fanny Burney, Mabel Dodge Lohan, James Brooke of Sarawak, the Soong sisters, Raffles of Singapore and Chiang Kai-shek and books about cookery, zoos, diamonds, natural history and travel as well as novels and books for children.

Sarah Anderson

Emily Hahn, traveller and writer: born St Louis, Missouri 14 January 1905; married Charles Boxer (two daughters); died New York 18 February 1997.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

KRAUSHAAR: On 8 May 1997, to Katherine and Robert, a daughter, Rosemary Jane.

DEATHS

LLOYD: John Russell (campaigner for Brighton West Pier), on 14 May 1997, Funeral Woodville South Crematorium, Bear Road, Brighton, on Tuesday 27 May 2.30pm. Donations if wished to Brighton West Pier Trust or Amnesty International, c/o Address: Funeral Directors, St James's Street, Brighton.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS may be telephoned to 0171-293 2012 or faxed to 0171-293 2018, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). **OTHER** Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of Kent, President, the Football Association, accompanied by The Duchess of Kent, today attends the FA Challenge Cup Final, at Wembley Stadium, Wembley, Middlesex.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; Nijmegen Company Grenadier Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Irish Guards. **TOMORROW:** The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am; 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

Forthcoming marriages

Dr R.K. S. Davidson and Dr S.A. Bartram The engagement is announced between Sarah Bartram and Brian Davidson. The marriage will take place on Saturday 30 August.

Birthdays

TODAY: The Earl of Airlie, Lord Chamberlain, 73; Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Baird, 73; Marshal of the RAF Sir Michael Beetham, chairman of the Trustees, RAF Museum, 74; Mr Keith Bradley MP, 47; Sir Rodric Brithwaite, former ambassador to Russia, 65; Professor Donald Cameron Watt, historian, 69; Miss Sue Carpenter, television presenter and journalist, 41; Mr Geoffrey Caston, former Vice-Chancellor, University of the South Pacific, 71; Sir Charles Cawley, former chief scientist, Ministry of Power, 90; Mr Bhagwat Chaudrasekhar, cricketer, 52; Lord Rev Ian Ganges, former Bishop of Lichfield, 69; Sir Ronald Halstead, former deputy chairman, British Steel, 70; Dr Raymond Hide, geophysicist, 68; Mr Simon Hughes MP, 46; Mr Alan Johnson MP, 47; Mr Peter Menzies, composer, 74; Sir Eric Menzies, former president, Westland Aircraft, 91; Miss Birgit Nilsson, operatic soprano, 75; Sir Alec Ogilvie, former chairman, Powell Company Grenadier Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Horse Guards, 11.30am, band provided by the Irish Guards. **TOMORROW:** The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am; 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

TOMORROW: Pope John Paul II, 77; Miss Holly Aird, actress, 28; Sir Richard Body MP, 70; Mr John Bruton, Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, 50; Miss Caroline Charles, fashion designer, 55; Mr Perry Como, singer, 85; Sir Patrick Cormack MP, 58; Mr Graham Dilley, cricketer, 38; Professor Sir Anthony Epstein, pathologist, 76; Sir Anthony Fell, former MP, 83; Professor Geoffrey Hall, nuclear scientist, 69; Rear-Admiral Peter Hammett, 69; Lord Hartwell, former chairman and Editor-in-Chief, the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*, 86; Mr Keith Hellawell, chief constable, West Yorkshire, 55; Mr David Jamieson MP, 50; Mr George Kilson, former Principal, Central School of Speech and Drama, 75; Professor Malcolm Longair, astronomer, 56; Miss Miriam Margulies, actress, 56; Lord St John of Fawley, writer, barrister and former MP, 65; Mr Jacques Santier, President of the European Commission, 60; Mr Norbert "Nobby" Stiles, footballer, 55; Mr Rick Wakeman, keyboard player and composer, 48; Miss Toyah Wilcox, singer and actress, 39; Mr Charles Wintour, former editor, the *Evening Standard*, 80.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Edward Jenner, surgeon and discoverer of vaccination, 1749; Erik Satie (Alfred Erik Leslie-Satie), composer, 1866; Denis Christopher George Potter, playwright and scriptwriter, 1925. **Deaths:** Sandro Botticelli (Alessandro di Mariano dei Filipeppi), painter, 1510; Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1575. On this day the Revised Version of the New Testament was issued, 1881; the foundation stone of the Victoria and Albert Museum was laid by Queen Victoria, 1899. **TODAY:** the Feast Day of St Bruno of Würzburg, St Madron or Modern and St Paschal Baylon.

TOMORROW: Births: Joseph Butler, bishop and philosopher, 1692; William Heinemann, publisher, 1863; Bertrand Arthur William Russell, third Earl Russell, philosopher, 1872; Walter Adolph Gropius, architect, 1883; Frank Capra, writer and film director, 1897; Fred Perry, tennis player, 1899. **Deaths:** Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, playwright, 1799; Gustav Mahler, composer, 1911; John Nevill Maske-lyne, stage magician, 1917. On this day: Henry II, King of England, married Eleanor of Aquitaine, 1152; Napoleon was proclaimed Emperor of France, 1804; the European Convention of Human Rights came into force, 1954; in Washington State, Mount St Helens erupted in a blast 500 times more powerful than the Hiroshima atom bomb, 1980. **Today:** St Sunday and the Feast Day of St Elgiva, St Eric, King of Sweden, St Felix of Cantalicio, St John I, pope, St Potamon and Saints Theodosius and Theusa.

Lectures

TODAY: National Gallery: Richard Stemp, "Family and Friends (iii): Solimena, *Dido Receiving Aeneas and Cupid Disguised as Ascanius*", 12pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Charlotte Conon, "Fashion on Paper and Contemporary Fashion Photography", 2.30pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "First Impressions: Gainsborough to Van Gogh", 1pm. British Museum: Rowena Lovance, "Roman Mosaics of Cyprus", 1.15pm. National Portrait Gallery: Dr Patricia Fara, "Science, Masculinity and Portraits of Joseph Banks", 3pm. **TOMORROW:** Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Second Thoughts: Turner to Matisse", 2.30pm.

Saying no to the theology of the trolley

Our problem is not that we live in a market economy. Markets are honest places, cheerful with the colours of produce, not of advertisements. They are straightforward places, where knowledgeable traders work hard for every modest penny. They are human places, where shoppers ponder and gossip and laugh. Our problem is that we live in a supermarket economy. In a supermarket, I see my fellows as obstacles or rivals. I don't even notice the produce. The forest of price-tags clamours for my distracted attention: newer! bigger! cheaper! MORE! No wonder the courtesies of life evaporate. No wonder children grab and parents snap.

I was brought up in a small market town, Kirkby Lonsdale in Cumbria. We still have our weekly market; our streets still flourish with small shops. Still. But even as I write the shadow of a threatened supermarket darkens the town where I received my earliest education in public affairs. Of course I did not know, as I ran down the hill after school, that lessons were not over. As I trotted to the sweetshop, I did not know that I was learning what would one day be called "PSE" (personal and social education) or "citizenship". But when old Mr Hastwell served me, passing the time of day as courteously as if I had been the bank manager, I was being schooled in civic friendship. And as I trailed my mother around the other shops I was discovering how grown-ups did business together: kindly and patiently, with evident mutual concern.

Later, I had to relearn the lesson consciously, when I returned each vacation from Cambridge. Before buying something, I needed to pause and remember that the curt self-absorption of super-

faith & reason

Supermarkets are not always super. Margaret Atkins argues that changes in shopping habits have made poor citizens of our children and undermined the nation's sense of community.

Market manners would here be interpreted as rudeness. A few years on, I was among a group of theological students discussing the notion of community. The undergraduates seemed unanimous that communities no longer exist. I ventured to object, citing my own experience. I was met with incomprehension, and something surprisingly like hostility: what right had I to such privilege?

Communities do survive, and not only in rural Cumbria. I moved to suburban Leeds, and have settled quickly into the neighbourhood where in the local shopkeepers—the grocer's and the baker's and the newsagent's—we know and are known. That is where we learn each other's names. As neighbours we may not be intimate, but we are soon predisposed to mutual care. The local children as they shop are being incorporated into, rather than alienated from, their community. They are learning the virtues that ground community.

What is it that we value today? Nigel Biggar's excellent new book, *Good Life*

(SPCK, £12.99) reflects on the question. When we say we want self-fulfilment or freedom, what do we mean? An unlimited choice of soap-powders? Why did the murder of Jamie Bulger strike many not as anomalous, but as symbolic? What is it that we fear?

Biggar argues that all communities are based upon friendship, and that to be part of a community is to be bound to others in a relationship of trust and care. We want, desperately, to be part of such a community, and we are frightened by symptoms of its decline. But to reverse that decline requires a great deal from all of us: attentiveness, imagination, patience, courtesy, generosity and trust.

Big business tells us that what we want most of all are bargains. We act every day as if we believe it. Each time that we succumb to the tawdry illusion, we betray our better selves. For our deepest desires are not material, but social. That is why our oldest political traditions are based on the common good. We have been called to communion, because our true vocation is friendship, with God and with our fellow-creatures. A friendship that needs to be learnt.

Mr Hastwell, God rest his soul, is long dead. His successors struggle on, our friends and teachers, as vital and as unnoticed as oxygen. We can destroy them within a generation, if so we wish: the choice is ours. Let us at least be clear what we are choosing. The next time that someone complains to you about loneliness, or insecurity, or stress, or the breakdown of society, ask just one question: where do you shop?

• *Faith & Reason* is edited by Paul Valley

هكذا من الاصل

Adina Năntoș sings the title role in Massenet's *Manon* at Glyndebourne
Photograph: Laurie Lewis

Opera is shaking off its elitist image: community operas, English translations, surtitles. Even Glyndebourne, which opens today, is getting a bit less stuffy, says sometime poet-librettist Ruth Padel



Bravissimo! Puccini for the people

Centuries before magic realism and the brat-pack American novel were ever heard of, opera combined their ideals. Coldly structured plots (no realism, please) riddled with dire coincidence and bizarre surprise, plus maraschino-cherry lushness. Atrocious in the farthest reaches of sophisticated elegance. Plus deep (well, fairly deep) meditation on sex and death, sex and torture, sex and love, parenthood, friendship with a dash of politics to boot up the sex and violence. Who needs *American Psycho* or *A Hundred Years of Solitude* when you've got *Tosca*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*?

Now we don't worry about realism any more; opera's PR problems boil down to two things: words and money. In our unlinguistically-minded island (can New Labour do something about this too?), it's a pity most operas aren't in English. And how do you hear words in any language, when a hundred tough bunnies disguised as an orchestra are trying to stop you? How do you pay for orchestra, singers and their clothes?

In the Bastille's production of *Manon Lescaut*, the prostitutes' wigs alone cost £15,000. If you pay everyone decently you must charge appalling prices, so some people go because they can afford posh things, not because they love opera.

I met opera when I was supposed to be learning German on a scholarship in Vienna. German didn't get learnt, but

I had a great time in the Viennese record shops. I'd ask to compare sets of whatever was on at the opera, listen to all the recordings, leave them ("not quite what I wanted") and hop off to *Steinplatz* at the *Oper*, which cost 15 schillings, less than a little meal. You had to stand, but got the best view. At *Götterdämmerung* I met a Californian woman of 90, wandering Europe with a knapsack and an opera guide. At the first interval rich Americans left. Opera then dinner was their itinerary, never mind what happened to Wotan in the next act. They handed their tickets to us, like dukes. From then on we sat in the front row of the stalls. Fantastic - but it summed up the old-style, casual-use-of-riches opera aura.

About 10 years ago my mum and I got given tickets for Glyndebourne's *Porgy and Bess*. All that money and glamour sitting through an elaborately staged, heart-rendingly sung evocation of the direst poverty, then prancing off to salmon mousse in one of the most expensively manicured gardens in England was obscene. I swore I'd never go there again.

But things change. Opera has opened up. Women are running opera houses. Women directors, film-makers, theatre directors are doing opera. *Don Giovanni* will never look the same since Deborah Warner got her hands on it. Small opera outfits everywhere are playing to full houses on a shoestring. There's community opera all over the

country every summer. I saw the most brilliant *Carmen* ever in a Suffolk tithe-barn. All the schoolchildren in the county had sewn milk bottle tops on the treads of their jackets. All their parents and grandparents and baby sisters were on stage. Peter Brook would have called it rough theatre; the atmosphere was electric. Forget those three tenors: community opera is the most amazing thing about opera's new profile.

Wonderful music about action, crowds, politics, violence, loneliness and sex, has a knack of bringing everything in: all the senses you have, plus all sorts of people, from babies to nonagenarian Californian hippies.

This has been dress-rehearsal month. I went to one at English National Opera with the poet Ruth Padel. Like me, she's worked on various opera-composer-meets-poet schemes, which generate new operas: formally, everywhere these days. I was on one where Don Paterson went on strike, said poetry had its own music anyway, and wrote a brilliant non-English piece in a dying dialect to the rhythm of a ball running its bounces down. It got beautifully set, and sung, but Don's attitude would not have satisfied Puccini.

I've only worked on short pieces - but long enough to find out what different animals poets and composers are. Ruth Padel has done whole operas and knows how bossy the people can be, never doing what poets tell them, whining about the time it takes to write and harmonise a lot of different parts. We, they say, have only (only!) words to deal with. Puccini was a poet's nightmare. On *Manon Lescaut* he got through seven librettists and fired them serially in humiliating explosions of temper. They didn't get their names on the programme, either, because the

punters would have laughed. (Text by who? By seven poets!) Then - the bastard - it became his first big hit.

I never dreamt a Tuesday morning at 10 outside London's Coliseum could feel like that twilight moment before an opera. All that milling expectancy plus a frisson of illicitness - something's happening in broad day that normally goes on only at night. Most people there were "Friends" of English National Opera. Ruth Padel was a Special Friend - and she took me to a revival of Jonathan Miller's brilliant *Thru the*.

English National Opera sings English. I'm not saying English poets are the be-all-and-end-all of English words, but I did feel that if this is how you're solving opera's little word-problem, a poet or two wouldn't hurt. That translation tried to find English equivalents for Italian words the music's used to. In

Alfredo's song explaining love to a love-crazed Violetta, a note Verdi wrote to misteriosa got "mystery" instead. Nice one. But it somehow involved sacrificing naturalness. Bathetic was one word that floated uneasily to mind - when I wasn't entranced by the gorgeous singing and heartbreaking staging. No way can you make variations on "Cry, unhappy woman" come over like *Plangi, piangi, O misera*.

Surtitles are opera's other way of solving the word-problem. Key bits of translation flash above the stage; you hear the original words but take in their sense through the eye.

This puts English National Opera in a double bind. You want to be democratic and available, you're putting the stuff out in English like the Spice Girls, who also don't use surtitles. But sometimes, even with the gentlest orchestra and most genius conductor, I'm afraid you need a surtitle or two. With surtitles, if the English words aren't brilliant, it doesn't matter, they're there for the sense not the sound.

Glyndebourne's gone for surtitles. In a funny way that country club in the dreamy Sussex Downs, one-time heart of privilege, is now another heart of opera's democratisation. It's been dress rehearsal time there too: I felt breath-holdingly lucky to see one for *Manon Lescaut*, opening tomorrow.

I was there by accident: I've got to give a pre-performance talk on that opera next week and Glyndebourne's education department thought it had better make me an expert on it fast. Plus I had a filming date, to contribute my mite to interval talks for Channel 4's live screening of it on 31 May.

Dress rehearsals there are performed to the staff (who otherwise don't see it) and their families. A fantastic atmosphere: lots of people working together, sharing something wonderful they've all helped to make, in a special place they all help to run, before the world they

do it for gets in. None of the staff was born to closed-club culture. They are a young, professional team dedicated from 10 in the morning to 12 at night to reaching the highest standards in everything (sandwiches to choreography) to do with opera, available to as many people and as cheaply as possible. Since the auditorium was enlarged, the Glyndebourne atmosphere has changed for ever.

They are somehow, God knows how, solving opera's expensive-ness problem too. In the new booking system, "Members" still get first go, but "Booking in Person" begins a while after. This year it began on 19 April. By nightfall on the 18th, 400 people in sleeping bags were queuing for the £10 standing tickets. These have a great view (as in Vienna) and Members can't buy them. In £16 "slip-seats" you sit sideways round the sides of the front row of the dress circle, for a fraction of what you pay for such seats at Covent Garden. All this has made the staff shinningly happy: the dream of opera admin is finally happening, all around them.

As for *Manon Lescaut* - my lips are sealed. I shouldn't have been there at all on that domestic occasion. The woman next to me was a lovely kindly woman, told me about a community opera project in Fishguard this year, but turned to me at half-time and whispered hoarsely, "How brilliant to have that power over a man!" I suddenly saw Mrs Whitehouse's point. Sex and violence are a potent mix. "Bit of a responsibility too?" I suggested, thinking of what happens to the guy in love with Manon. "To hell with responsibility," she muttered.

Perhaps opera should be consigned to the flames after all, along with *American Psycho* and television. When poets and composers do get together they have a lot to answer for.

Where to hear poets unfettered by the iron whims of megalomaniac composers:

Ian Duhig, Sean O'Brien, Ruth Padel
20 May, 8pm
Bridge Hotel, Newcastle

Robin Robertson, John Burnside
22 May, 8pm
Old Operating Theatre, London Bridge

Jehane Markham, Vernon Scannell
25 May, 8pm
The French House, Soho

Elizabeth Garrett,
3 June, 8pm
The Gantry, Southampton

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Streaking has always been a rather idiosyncratic and gloriously silly British pastime which has enlivened the odd cricket or rugby match. I cannot for the life of me get inside the head of the potential streaker, and I have to say that it is not something that has ever entered my repertoire, probably much to the relief of many spectators. There was a bloke at college who streaked from the top to the bottom of the library dressed only in shoes and an identity-disguising balaclava, only to be told by his girlfriend, unaware of his participation, that the streaker was about as well-endowed as an ant.

The whole point of streaking is that it is a relatively spontaneous act performed by a rather strange person and not an orchestrated event for which the participants are paid. So it was rather galling to discover that the recent rash of streakers at Premiership football matches was organised and funded by the magazine *Loaded*, that rag for pubescent boys who spend most of their time in their bedrooms fantasising about women they could

never hope to even meet, let alone engage in anything else with. That any spontaneous and inherently funny aspect of our lives can be commercialised in this way is scummy - especially when it comes from a magazine that chooses to treat women merely as breasts on legs.

A study this week shows that a sizeable number of nurses in casualty departments are assaulted by patients on a fairly regular basis and that numbers are rising. It is interesting, given the general paranoia about the behaviour of psychiatric patients, that the individuals handing out the violence in casualty departments are actually supposed to be "normal". I would be interested to see a comparison of accident and emergency departments and psychiatric emergency clinics to see just which is more violent. I assume much of the violence is to do with alcohol and waiting time. Alcohol, as we know, is the great social disinhibitor and increasingly a problem in all walks of life. I don't think it's unfair to expect a minimum amount of

sobriety in casualty, particularly for those with minor injuries. Still, you need decent security to enforce it and that costs money. As for those people who can't wait, they will be the ones with less serious injuries anyway, so they should just be asked to leave if they get difficult. I would imagine nurses are getting pretty sick of being punchbags. At least when I was a psychiatric nurse, there was some expectation of violence, which was countered by close teamwork and a basic knowledge of dealing with trouble. In casualty, nurses are desperate just to get on and sort out medical problems. I'm sure no nurses would wish to see casualty departments become like

forts but if the general public can't behave themselves, it is far more important to maintain the safety of NHS staff rather than allow the thuggish element to run riot. Still, I'm sure many trust managers will have a decent amount of money set aside for just this purpose - not.

The finer points of certain aspects of sport are often lost to those who are not aficionados of the particular game. Thus, I have failed to pick up over the years the fact that teeny bit faster on its way, golfers lick it before they bang it on the tee. It's not such a good idea, according to medical types. It seems that if you lick a golf ball, you also lick what's

on it, which includes various weedkillers which can then give you something called golf-ball liver. This minute, yet telling example of pollution of our environment will hopefully add strength to the argument of eco types; and as the men who make their money out of flogging this horrible stuff probably play a fair bit of golf too, let's hope they've done enough licking to make them think twice.

One positive thing that has happened this week is that the Labour government (doesn't that sound great?) has lifted the ban on unions at GCHQ in Cheltenham which was imposed in 1984 by the Tories, who worried that the integrity of those carrying state secrets around in their heads would be compromised by some industrial clout. I remember once meeting someone at a comedy show who worked at GCHQ. I was fascinated and asked him about the job. He said, "You wouldn't believe what goes on there." Tell me, I said. "Sorry, Official Secrets Act," he replied. Isn't integrity irritating sometimes?

صكرا من الامل

choc
horror

If only Howard
and
Widdicombe
could have
shared the
same planet

david
aaronovitch

This has been a testing few weeks for those of us whose glands produce too much empathy. Flagged by over-active compassion, we find ourselves making excuses for falling movie stars. There but for the grace of God (a ticket to LA and a Mercedes convertible) go we. Our weak voices are often to be heard in pubs and clubs, attempting to soften the censure that our less sensitive acquaintances happily lavish upon those who transgress.

But there can be remarkably few who, listening to the sad tale of Michael Howard, Ann Widdicombe and Derek Lewis – a story of prisons, of blighted careers, of unhappy dinners, of wilted flowers and of uneaten chocolates – there can, I repeat, be remarkably few of us who did not wet ourselves laughing.

But I am, I confess, one of those few. True, friends often remark upon the sweetness of my temperament, upon my essential good nature. I am a constant receptacle for the confidences of others (only a few of which am I planning to use in my forthcoming book *Tales of Adultery*).

Let us, for a moment, forget Howard's manacled nuns and deported refugees – many of whom have actually survived – and examine the purely human dimension of this tragedy (which is no less awful simply because it involves men and women who recently wielded such power over us all).

According to one version of events Mr Howard is a reptilian megalomaniac, whose meddling and mendacity alienated his erstwhile supporter, who is only now making a clean breast of things. According to another version, Ms Widdicombe, a slightly uneven woman accustomed to eating many chocolates (and to having to buy all of them), was flattered by the attentions of Mr Howard's enemy (Mr Lewis) and, thus seduced, turned against her boss. Most people believe both versions.

I am not so sure. Recent discussions at home have led me to purchase a copy of the mammoth best-seller *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. This useful book explains how inter-gender misunderstandings happen, and how men and women can avoid them. Mr Howard is (metaphorically) a Martian, and Ms Widdicombe (equally

metaphorically) a Venusian. They come from different planets and speak different languages.

You see, when a man (sorry, a Martian) says something, a Venusian translates it as meaning something else. Men are withdrawn and live in caves, becoming focused on the solving of a particular problem (such as: prisoners keep on escaping, how can I make sure I don't get the blame?). He is "incapable of giving the woman the attention she deserves". She, of course, sees this as rejection, since her own inclination would be to talk about things openly. The hurt Venusian begins to make demands ("you must not sack Derek Lewis"), and the Martian reacts by shutting her out. His tone becomes more peremptory. Ms Widdicombe recalls that when she sent flowers to Mrs Lewis ("an act of Christian charity," she called it. Presumably the Lewises do not have a garden of their own). Mr Howard bawled her out.

The result of these interplanetary communication failures has been the damage done to Mr Howard's career and Ms Widdicombe's self-esteem. And it could all have been so very different. The book has thoughtfully adumbrated a list of "101 ways to score with a woman" (it means something different in American), and vice versa.

Consider how history might have been changed had Mr Howard acted thus to Ms Widdicombe:

1. Given her a big hug daily;
2. Asked specific questions about her day (eg, "How is the managing going? Do you need a hand?");
3. Been patient when she was sharing (ie, about the church and the dreadful ordination of women), and not looked at his watch or newspaper;
4. Bought her presents – like, er, chocolates and flowers;
5. Laughed at her jokes and humour (a tough one, admittedly);
6. In the private Home Office cloakroom, led the seat down.

In return she would have made him feel more secure by making fewer demands (no more "I need an extra billion for all these new prisons") and would never, ever have said "I told you so".

It's too late now, of course. What a terrible shame.

If last season's must-have was a baby, this season it's a girlfriend. Never since the ancient Greeks have all things Sapphic caught the fashionable moment.

After the years of stars hiding their true sexuality, now it is almost obligatory to be caught snogging your gal-pal at an awards dinner, a White House bash or the latest premiere. If you're not gay, the least you can do is join in, as Caroline Aherne (aka Mrs Merton) did earlier this week when she was photographed French-kissing Eurovision Song Contest winner Katrina Leskanich at the Sony Radio Awards ceremony.

Even Gori Spice has admitted fancying fellow Spice Victoria, and the British computer program Converse, which has won the Loebner prize for its ability to hold conversation on screen, demonstrated its prowess by talking about CNN's reports on Ellen DeGeneres kissing her female lover in front of President Clinton.

Culturally, our society has changed since the (sadly apocryphal) story that lesbians were not mentioned in the law on public decency because Queen Victoria could not believe that women could do that to each other. The political angle popular in the 1970s, when for some being a lesbian was following feminist ideals through to its logical conclusion, also seems to have faded into the background.

Now lesbians "are all the rage", says Anya Palmer of Stonewall. "It's extraordinary. There are lots of well-known and successful women coming out – or admitting their fantasies." The media has been transfixed by stories, such as that of novelist Jeanette Winterson revealing that in her past she was paid in Le Creuset saucepans for sex, or the mystery writer Patricia Cornwell, accused of stealing the wife of a former FBI "deep cover" agent, Eugene Bennett, in a lesbian love-triangle.

So it's been a good year for lesbians, if even sitcom stars are joining in the fun. We seem to be living in a more tolerant society where it's okay to be gay. But does Mrs Merton snogging Katrina actually do anything for real-life lesbians or is the influence wiped away with the lipstick?

Ellen DeGeneres's coming out did have a great influence, according to Sony and Cher's daughter Chastity Bono, who finally came out in 1995 after years of speculation. In the episode of *Ellen* where Ms DeGeneres came out, the cast was star-studded. Oprah Winfrey (who else?) played Ellen's psychotherapist and lesbian singer kd lang made a guest appearance.

The real Ellen is also making the most of it. She made the cover of *Time* magazine, had an interview on ABC's main personality slot 20/20 and, most daring of all, arrived at one of Washing-

Oh, the lesbian
chic of it all

by Glenda Cooper



Girls come out to play: (clockwise from top left) Sophie Ward and on-screen companion, Ellen DeGeneres and friend, Chastity Bono, Caroline Aherne with Katrina Leskanich, and kd lang

Lesbianism is fine – as long as you look like Sophie Ward (and not her lover, who was described as a bulldog chewing a wasp) and you don't have kids

ton's chief social events of the year – the White House Correspondents Association dinner – with, as one correspondent put it, "her friend, the rising Hollywood star Anne Heche, on her arm and occasionally around her neck."

"When Ellen's coming-out episode was shown, it is estimated it got 36 to 37 per cent audience share – that's 45 million people who watched it," says Ms Bono, entertainment and media director for GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Discrimination) based in Beverly Hills. "It's great stuff. I do think things are changing. Last year, the film *Bound* (which has just opened in the UK) was an excellent film but what was so good about it was that it wasn't seen as a 'lesbian film' but a good film, even though the two protagonists were lesbians."

One theory that has been put forward is that the growing acceptance of lesbianism is because the barriers between homosexuality and heterosexuality are coming down – as Amanda de Cadenet said when she was hanging out with Courtney Love, holding hands and sporting identical silky

nights and tiaras. "Lesbianism doesn't mean you're gay," she opined. "It's an extension of friendship."

Marjorie Garber, professor of English at Harvard University agrees: "Of course, bisexuality is not a new thing on the cultural or erotic scene. There was 'bisexual chic' in the Seventies, in the Twenties and Thirties, in the 1890s and the 1990s... Bisexuality is sexy to a lot of people and (perhaps therefore) threatening to some."

Lots of our most glamorous stars have been or are bisexual – Marlene Dietrich, James Dean, Tyrone Power, Greta Garbo, Judy Garland, Marlon Brando, Elton John, Sandra Bernhard. The appearance of recent biographies of all of these figures emphasising their bisexual lives draws attention to the fact that we as

readers and consumers of culture are fascinated by bisexuality. It's really an aspect of star power – to make everyone fall in love with you."

The other theory for greater acceptance of lesbians is that they are less threatening and more cuddly than gay men. There is less aggressive in-your-face sexuality, more "gentleness" as one commentator put it. (Or more classic

male fantasy, a cynic might argue).

But life for lesbians in Britain is not all Chanel lipstick and Sophie Ward. Despite 120 women MPs in the new Parliament, not one says she is a lesbian, according to Stonewall. Ms Palmer points out that the other prominent "lesbian" story of the week, apart from Mrs Merton and Katrina, was that of the two women who had become pregnant through insemination. Under the headline "Gay mums are making a sickening mockery of motherhood", *The Sun* accused Lisa and Dawn Whiting of having "DIY babies" and brand the case "a sickening, selfish, immoral perversion of the act of procreation".

The recent ubiquity of Ellen DeGeneres in the popular press has made some of us more visible but you have to set that against quite revolting coverage that we have seen in *The Sun* about women who have chosen to raise children in a lesbian family. They have been vilified, says Gillian Rodgers, editor of *Diva* magazine, the bi-monthly journal of lesbian life and style. "What particularly depresses me is that people such as Victoria Gillick can say that the children of these women should be put up for adoption because they are irresponsible parents. I do think that is a bit rich coming from someone who has had as many children as she has."

There is always been a tolerance for certain kinds of lesbian – Helen Baxendale is a babe, so no-one minds if she character she plays likes women. Anyone glamorous seems to get away with it," says columnist Suzanne Moore. "But once it involves lesbian parents, then it becomes disgusting, however the children are produced. Lesbian babes are a glamorous classic male fantasy. They don't quite believe that women can manage without a man. They are no sexual threat. But once they have a child, it's like 'we really meant this; we're not joking – we don't need you'."

So lesbian chic is fine as long as you look like the actress Sophie Ward (and not her lover, who was described as a bulldog chewing a wasp), you don't have kids and you're well off. Prejudice against lesbians is manifested not against what you do but how you look when you do it. Or as Ms Rodgers wryly points out: "If you're young, pretty, white, middle class and urban, your life will be better whether you are lesbian or heterosexual."

Britain's youth: armed and dangerous

I think that Mr Reggie Kray is puzzled that he has not yet received a call from Downing Street, or at least from the new Home Secretary. After all, if you really want to tackle crime, why not call in the experts? New Labour, New Britain. Mr Kray, currently a guest of Her Majesty's Prison, Maidstone, asked to see me to congratulate me on a film I had made some years ago about him and his brother. His late brother was slightly less chuffed at the time. I interviewed his wife, Kate, in the back of a car, one morning; by the afternoon, Ronnie had called to say that he was directly underwhelmed that I had been so familiar with his misdeeds. He was even less impressed by one of the questions that I asked Kate: why are you marrying a declared homosexual with whom you will never be able to live? She said their love was pure; he said that it was none of my business and that I would be well advised to keep my nose out of it, or else I might manage to leave it behind somewhere.

Anyway, the surviving twin, now an elderly dandy, is much given to collecting ornate gold jewellery; he was carrying the equivalent of a small pawn shop around his neck when I saw him. However, he is a serious man and follows current affairs and reads the papers. He huts and shakes his head over the



Trevor Phillips

Violence
and the fear
of violence
among
young men
is soaring –
we need
answers,
not
platitudes

young of today. But many of his supporters may feel that their moment has come. Over in the East End of London, any mention of the Krays brings a misty smile to the lips of ladies of a certain age, and an indulgent sigh of nostalgia to old men. Their answer to a wave of vicious assaults by young men is a simple one. It is to "bring back the Krays". Apparently, when Ronnie and Reggie were on the street no youngster would dare to break the rule that vicious, arbitrary violence was the exclusive privilege of the twins and their associates. This is garbage, that ranks alongside the notion that the gangsters of the Sixties only "did it to their own". But even if it did hold the slightest sliver of truth, Reggie would admit that today's young are beyond his ken.

In the past three years, 14 schoolchildren have died as a result of knife assaults. In the capital alone this week there have been some 60 stabbings. It would be comforting to say that this is all just a fringe activity among a small number of disturbed inner-city children; that there are just a few bullies trying to prove that they're "hard". However, this violence is not just limited to a few schools in big cities; attacks have occurred in provincial towns. What is worse is that fear of violence is fuelling yet more.

Government figures tell us that young men between 15 and 20 are more at risk of violent attack than any other section of our society. This was yesterday supported by a survey carried out by Dan Barraclough at *The London Programme*. Of 240 youths interviewed, two-thirds felt at risk of attack. But revealingly, his team's survey also showed that a quarter admitted to carrying weapons as a defence against attacks. The young people said that although they might be relatively safe on school grounds, on the way home they were "totally vulnerable". In the past, the answer for many children would be to run away, tell their parents or, in extreme cases, refuse to go to school. No longer.

Last month I sat with Frances Lawrence, the widow of the west London headmaster Philip Lawrence who was stabbed to death by a 15-year-old outside his own school gate, and talked to a group of young people, many of whom admitted to carrying weapons. The most telling response to the question, "Why don't you walk away from trouble?" was from a boy who said, "You say you can walk away. But they can come back, and they'll come back." Not one of a group of around 20 teenagers felt that they could trust teach-

ers or the police to protect them; in fact the idea produced reactions ranging from scorn to hilarity. So if they have to rely on themselves, what do they do? The answer is to fight fire with fire.

Researchers at Exeter University have revisited a study they conducted 18 months ago, which showed that 2 per cent of young men carried knives; now the proportion has doubled to 4 per cent. If these numbers seem small, think about it this way: in a school with a thousand boys, 40 pupils will regularly be carrying weapons to school.

In some places, notably London and Manchester, there are even ethnic specialisms. Whites carry Stanley knives, orientals meat cleavers, and black boys favour the machete. Boys learn early that if you want to avoid prosecution you can clean your weapon with bleach and "get it right" for forensics. If you don't want to walk around obviously tooled up, carry a Luccozade bottle – it breaks easily and gives you a good edge. This is a world with expertise, a language and an accepted culture.

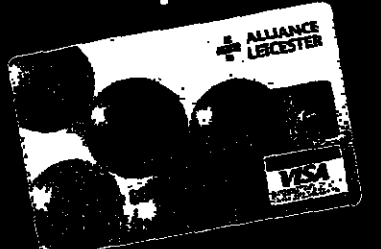
In Glasgow, police have instituted an effective regime of zero tolerance around teen clubs, in an effort to stop the late-night violence. In seven months, they've recovered getting on for a thousand

weapons; but even they would acknowledge that they're barely scratching the surface of the problem.

The violence is partly driven by familiar causes: deprivation, alienation, and stress in families. It is, in some places, also a product of ethnic gang warfare about which the authorities seem puzzlingly silent.

Some part of the answer must lie in economic regeneration, in arresting the destruction of youth services, and in the provision of something for young people to do with acres of spare time. But there is something even more disturbing going on here that Mr Straw and his gang have to get a handle on quickly before the sporadic trickle of everyday tragedies becomes a tidal wave of young men's blood. In the last parliament, Labour went along with Michael Howard's opposition to a ban on knives on the grounds that it was impractical. It may be so, but Mr Straw is going to have to do better than that in power. We have to stop the growth of casual, tit-for-tat violence as a way of life among the young.

Unfortunately, I don't think the Krays can help us now, if they ever could. Reggie probably wouldn't last long in the average school playground of the Nineties; he may be safer where he is.

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Pharmaceuticals giant announces end to business with controversial contract testers Huntingdon Life Sciences

Glaxo to face ire of animal protesters

Sameena Ahmad

Glaxo Wellcome and Zeneca, two of the UK's biggest pharmaceutical groups, are withholding all new business from the controversial animal testing company, Huntingdon Life Sciences, following the recent broadcast of a disturbing television documentary showing scenes of cruelty to dogs at its Cambridgeshire laboratory.

The two pharmaceutical companies said yesterday that they were awaiting the outcome of a Home Office investigation into Huntingdon's scientific practices before they placed any new contracts. SmithKline Beecham, the UK's second largest pharmaceutical group, said it would wait for the Home Office report, believed to have been completed in early May, before commenting.

The moves by Glaxo and Zeneca came a fortnight after Astra, the giant Swedish drug group, said it would no longer use Huntingdon to test drugs. It said the decision was not dependent on the Home Office report.

Huntingdon, which is valued at £91m, is one of the UK's largest animal testing laboratories. According to analysts, the pharmaceutical division which incorporates drug testing, represents around two-thirds of the group's total sales. In the UK, the 10 largest drug groups contribute around 30 per cent of group sales.

An analyst who did not want to be named said: "Drug testing is a very lucrative business for Huntingdon. I think you would have to be very nervous if any major drug group cancelled business with them." Huntingdon's share price has been under pressure over the last few weeks, and has steadily fallen from 121p to 80p. In 1993 the share price peaked at 243p.

Huntingdon's chief executive, Christopher Cliffe, said yesterday: "We have closely followed contractual commitments that are confidential. We have no intention of discussing them." Glaxo, Zeneca, SmithKline and Astra's existing contracts with the company will continue.



Under pressure: Glaxo dealt a pre-emptive blow against protesters before next week's agm by saying it will await a Home Office report before acting

Glaxo's statement made yesterday that it "will await the Home Office report before we place any new contracts" has been construed by some industry observers as a pre-emptive strike against animal rights protesters, who are threatening to disrupt its annual general meeting on Monday over its links with Huntingdon.

Ann Bunting, who runs a 100-strong animal rights group in Stevenage, where Glaxo has

its huge research base, is a regular at the group's meetings. Ms Bunting, who is also a shareholder with one Glaxo share, said: "Glaxo refuse to tell us whether they use Huntingdon, but we're sure they do. We want to embarrass them and hope other shareholders will join us." Her representatives will be joined at Monday's meeting by a dozen or so activists from London Animal Aid, who will also demonstrate against Glaxo's re-

cently opened beagle farm. Paul Thompson, a member said: "We've campaigned against Unilever and Boots, but never before at Glaxo. It will probably be fairly low key this year, but next year there'll be more of us." The protests against Glaxo reflect growing pressure on public companies from activists campaigning on ethical issues. Earlier this week, Shell's agm was picketed by members of Greenpeace and Amnesty Interna-

tional, protesting against the group's environmental policies. The Channel 4 documentary, screened two months ago and called *It's a Dog's Life*, secretly filmed Huntingdon employees kicking and hurling a beagle against a wall. After the programme, the Home Office withdrew the licences of several technicians and began a wider investigation of the company. A spokesman for Zeneca which has used the group for at

least 15 years, said: "Before this, Huntingdon had a very good reputation... but we are all shocked about what was uncovered and we won't be placing any more contracts with them until we are reassured that things are being operated properly." Astra, however, is not prepared to give Huntingdon a second chance. Their spokesman said: "We will not use Huntingdon any more after our current drug trials are finished."

Lloyd's of London opens its doors to DTI

John Willcock

Lloyd's of London said yesterday it intended to throw itself open to external regulation after 300 years of looking after its own affairs. The move is designed to boost confidence in its recovery.

A report by a Lloyd's working party set up in October 1996 under Sir Alan Hardcastle recommends bringing in the Securities and Investments Board and the Department of Trade and Industry to supervise the market. The Council of Lloyd's has thrown itself behind the proposals in the report, which was published yesterday.

Under self-regulation, Lloyd's suffered losses of £8bn over the five-year period to 1992, culminating in a £3bn rescue operation last year. Some 40 per cent of its investors sued the market claiming negligence and fraud contributed to their losses. While most of the lawsuits were settled in September when the market reorganised, the taint undermined confidence in Lloyd's.

The report by the Lloyd's regulatory review group aims to boost confidence by simplifying and opening out regulatory procedures, and allowing the SIB and DTI to supervise the insurance market's Regulatory Council.

Sir David Rowland, Lloyd's chairman, said: "The Council fully supports the recommendation for further external regulatory oversight and the overall thrust of the report."

The report recommends that the regulatory board should be cut from 18 to 12 members, and remodelled to make Lloyd's regulation fit in with rest of financial services industry.

The working party stresses that Lloyd's is in a unique position as a market consisting of a raft of independent brokers and investors with a central fund, a structure it intends to leave unchanged. But it wants to slash red tape and the costs of supervising the market, while introducing charges for "users" of regulation. The report also proposes a unit to detect and monitor potentially damaging areas of risk in the market.

The DTI was involved in the rescue of Lloyd's since it has powers under the Insurance Companies Act to intervene if Lloyd's threatened to go bankrupt. But the DTI can only act when Lloyd's is close to insolvency. The new proposals would mean a much more regular, hands-on approach. Sir Alan said.

BAT 'considering demerger' decision by next autumn

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

BAT Industries, the tobacco and financial services conglomerate, is "actively considering" a demerger with a decision expected in the autumn. Sources close to BAT said yesterday the company was looking at a variety of options, but one was a straight de-merger of the group which would give shareholders a share in both the tobacco and financial services businesses. Share-

holders would then see part of their investment protected from the potential impact of tobacco-related litigation in the US. It is understood that the main driver toward de-merger on the BAT board is Lord Cairns, the group's chairman. He is said to have made several comments in recent weeks which have indicated a softening of the company's line on the issue. Lord Cairns has spent this week in China and was due to return yesterday.

The fresh information marks a further shift in BAT's stance. At the company's annual meeting last month Lord Cairns said the board had "an open mind" on splitting the tobacco and financial services businesses and that there were "no sacred cows". Just one month earlier he had said he "remained unconvinced" about the merits of a split.

There has been speculation that BAT would not consider its Allied Dunbar and Eagle Star

financial services business to be a strong enough entity to be a stand-alone business. City analysts have suggested that BAT might merge its financial services interests with Abbey National, which is keen to expand. BAT would take a major stake in the bank in return.

Other suggestions include BAT acquiring Commercial Union or Legal & General prior to a de-merger.

Break-up talk escalated last December when it emerged that unsuccessful talks had taken place to merge BAT's financial services with Commercial Union. BAT was keen to play down break-up speculation yesterday. It said it did not comment on market rumour and added that its position on any potential de-merger had not changed since its annual meeting.

BAT shares rose 10p to 559.5p yesterday. Abbey National jumped 25.5p to 961p.

BAT's tobacco brands include Lucky Strike, Kent and 555. The group's shares have been under a cloud due to uncertainties caused by litigation in the US. However, the shares received a boost earlier this month when RJ Reynolds, one of its key competitors, was cleared by a jury of causing the death of a woman who had smoked its cigarettes for 30 years.

BAT has taken a tough line on any future negotiations over a comprehensive industry-wide settlement. "Even if a broad resolution cannot be achieved, the lawsuits (against the group in the US) will ultimately have no material impact on the financial condition of the group."

The company last month reported first quarter profits of £591m. Tobacco profits were 2 per cent higher at £363m. Profits in financial services were 3 per cent up at £266m.

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Fine Art Developments to spin off card operation

Fine Art Developments, which issued a shock profit warning in November, is splitting itself in half by demerging its card and paper products manufacturing division into a separate company by the early autumn, writes Sameena Ahmad.

The move was welcomed by analysts who said it would allow the group to focus more clearly on improving the cards business and the struggling mail order operation. Shares in Fine Art, which crashed 40 per cent to 260p in a day after November's warning, recovered 35p to close at 276p yesterday.

Keith Chapman, chairman, said that the company had considered the possibility of a de-merger for several years. "It will

improve investors' understanding of the underlying strengths of the two businesses," he said.

The news came as Fine Art reported full-year underlying pre-tax profits to 31 March down 27 per cent to £30.1m on sales 1 per cent lower at £360m. Operating profits in the mail order business slumped 32 per cent to £18m. The cause was a disappointing performance from the loss-making Dee Group, the home-shopping network bought in 1995 for £2.25m.

The card and paper products division, where profits fell 11 per cent to £22m, suffered from weakness in its wholesale side. Brian Rayner of Peel Hunt, the stockbrokers, said: "This is

borne of necessity. There is no real relationship between the two sides of the business. Management can be much more dedicated in building up both sides."

Mr Chapman said the spin off greetings card business "would be the largest of its kind in Europe and extremely well positioned as the leading supplier to national retailers". Mr Chapman, who remains as executive chairman of the mail order side and become non-executive chairman of the demerged greetings cards business.

Investors will be offered shares in the new business in proportion to their existing holding in the company. The group has maintained its 16.5p dividend.

Gallagher to lobby Government on planned tobacco advertising ban

Magnus Grimond

Gallagher, the UK's biggest cigarette group, yesterday added its voice to that of its arch-rival Imperial Tobacco in promising to fight Labour's decision to ban tobacco advertising. The group, which is expected to be floated at up to £2.4bn when it floats at the end of this month, said it would be lobbying the new Government on the issue.

Peter Wilson, chairman and chief executive, said: "We do not see any justification for any erosion in our ability to compete. As far as we can see, there is no evidence that advertising has any effect on smoking." But in any case, Gallagher, famous for its oblique advertising for leading brands such as Benson & Hedges and Silk Cut, said it had been preparing for such a ban for several years. "If we do lose advertising, the enormous 'equity' we have established [in our brands] will stand us in enormously good stead," he said.

The company refuses to reveal its advertising budget, but it has spent heavily building a 30,000-

strong network of promotional displays and kiosks in retail outlets to evade any ban. The company also played down the likely effects of any litigation connecting smoking with cancer.

Mr Wilson's comments came as Gallagher unveiled details of the float, which will be by way of a demerger to the mainly US shareholders of its parent, American Brands, owner of famous names such as Whyte & Mackay whisky, Jim Beam Bourbon and Tiddie golf clubs.

Hopes of an early bid for the group are likely to be dampened by the revelation in the prospectus that BAT Industries has signed an agreement not to mount a hostile bid for Gallagher before October 1999, unless a rival bidder jumps into the fray. The deal was forced on BAT after it requested details about Gallagher as part of a "very preliminary" bid approach last year. Gallagher has long been seen as a near perfect fit for BAT, which acquired its American Tobacco subsidiary from American Brands in 1994 but has no significant UK interests.

Gallagher also revealed that its directors will be entitled to "golden parachutes" worth two years' pay and bonus entitlement in the event of a takeover. That suggests Mr Wilson, the highest-paid director with total emoluments of £738,000 in 1996, could receive a pay-off of close to £15m.

The company claims 39 per cent of all cigarette sales, just ahead of Imperial, and to have effectively invented the low tar segment with its Silk Cut brand.

Pre-tax profits have fluctuated around £300m for the past five years, and despite more than halving the workforce since 1985, another 650 jobs may go when production is transferred from Hyde, near Manchester, to Northern Ireland over the next three to four years.

The demerger will be the first time a US company has demerged a mainly UK business and has already run into problems with the Inland Revenue, which is threatening to withdraw tax relief for interest payable on the £945m debt being loaded on to the company at flotation.

Licence could put Chrysalis in red

Cathy Newman

A return to profits announced yesterday by Chrysalis Group may be short-lived if the music and media group succeeds in its attempt to win one of two licences being advertised this year.

Chrysalis, yesterday confirmed it would apply for the North-west and North-east regional licences. However, a new radio franchise would require up to £3m in start-up costs and would prevent Chrysalis fulfilling its promise to break even in 1998.

Chris Wright, chairman, said he was positive about the company's future. Group trading for the six months to the end of February yielded pre-tax profits of £1.5m. However, while the profit appeared to be a big recovery compared with the £2.9m of losses incurred in the

corresponding period last year, the results were artificially inflated by gains of £3.2m from disposals.

Mr Wright said the company would expand further into European TV production through its joint venture with the Dutch publisher VNU and a deal with a Scandinavian production company was nearing completion.

Chrysalis is taking a cautious approach to digital audio broadcasting (DAB). Richard Huntingford, chief executive of the radio division, said DAB "was not going to impact until 2007".

He said: "We're looking closely at DAB because it would provide an opportunity to roll Heart and Galaxy [Chrysalis' two radio stations] out on a national basis. But we're happy to see other groups go out and be money-spenders."

National Power ends hope of buying a REC

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

National Power yesterday abandoned any remaining hopes of buying a regional electricity company, after it sold its remaining stake in Southern Electric for £160m, built up before last year's blocked takeover bid.

The news boosted shares in PowerGen as the markets speculated that National Power's rival might consider renewing its ambitions in the regional power market. Both National Power and PowerGen were blocked from buying regional electricity companies (RECs) on monopoly grounds by Ian Lang, the former president of the board of trade, last year.

PowerGen was incensed by the decision, which opened the way to the flood of overseas bids, leaving Southern Electric as the only independent REC left. Yesterday's news added 3.5p to National Power shares, which closed at 566.5p, while PowerGen shares rose 6.5p to 689p.

National Power sold 38.6 million shares in Southern, representing 8 per cent of the company, through brokers HSBC James Capel. The sale price was just under 420p, raising around £160m for the generator. Southern Electric's share price edged up 1p to 426.5p.

Late last year National Power revealed a £57m exceptional loss, mainly on the stake in Southern, which it bought for an average price of around 970p. Shares in RECs have fallen

since National Power bought the stake, following payouts from the National Grid flotation and a wave of special dividends. National Power is expected to make a further small provision of some £5m to cover additional losses on the shareholding.

National Power's decision to sell the stake also suggested the chances of a bid emerging for Southern had receded since the change of government. "We think the market conditions are right. You've got to be pretty clear there isn't any outstanding bid speculation," said a source close to the generator. One analyst said National Power had been "unlucky" that unlike PowerGen it had not managed to sell its stake through a takeover bid.

Despite the surge in PowerGen shares, analysts suggested a bid was unlikely. Simon Taylor, an electricity analyst with investment bankers BZW, said: "I would be doubtful if a new Labour government would start off by allowing vertical integration of that sort. I'd doubt they'd allow PowerGen to buy a REC at this stage. They might well feel they'd prefer to keep the structure of the industry as it is at least for the time being."

National Power said it planned to launch a raised £2.5bn bid for Southern Electric in April 1998 if it gained government clearance. PowerGen had also made a bid for Midlands Electricity. The Government blocked the two bids, overturning the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield (%)	Dividend	Dividend Yield (%)	Dividend Payout (%)
FTSE 100	4981.20	-5.70	-0.1	4991.00	4056.60	3.48			
FTSE 250	4521.90	-7.40	-0.2	4729.40	4459.40	3.69			
FTSE 350	2266.70	-3.00	-0.1	2271.60	2017.90	3.50			
FTSE SmallCap	2314.63	-1.97	-0.1	2374.20	2178.29	3.03			
FTSE All-Share	2225.69	-2.80	-0.1	2230.66	1989.78	3.47			
New York	7303.88	+17.72	+0.2	7292.75	5032.94	1.71			
Tokyo	20096.21	-153.41	-0.8	20238.72	17303.86	0.61			
Hong Kong	14041.90	-111.68	-0.8	14153.56	12055.17	3.04			
Frankfurt	3562.11	-11.58	-0.3	3695.15	2948.77	1.52			

Statistics as of 16 May

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling			UK medium gilt			US long bond			
1 Month	6.88		6.88			8.04	7.03	8.14	
3 Month	6.88		6.88			6.75	6.88	6.93	
6 Month	6.88		6.88			6.45	6.47		
1 Year	6.88		6.88						

CURRENCIES									
Pound			Dollar			Other currencies			
£/\$	1.6405	+0.0006	1.5131			£/DM	0.6086	-0.32	0.6089
£/¥	164.05	+0.0006	1.5131			DM/¥	0.5073	-0.10	0.5080
DM/£	2.7898	+0.0006	1.5131			DM/£	1.7096	+0.34	1.5341
DM/¥	194.12	-0.0004	1.5131			DM/¥	118.325	-0.675	106.855
£/DM	99.3	+0.5	84.5			£/DM	103.1	-0.3	99.9

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The two companies refused to address the competition issues raised by the deal, choosing to stress that together they would have only 5 per cent of the world market for spirits.

regulators. As it happens, it will be the European Commission in Brussels which decides this one. Its size and European dimension dictate it. So Labour's views on the matter may be irrelevant too. All the same, Guinness would be wrong to think the new Government more favourable to its position than the old. Guinness will not be able to rely on support from Mrs Beckett in the very likely event that regulators attempt to extract a price in the form of disposals and other measures for this merger.

If ever Labour felt inclined to back big powerful UK monopolies, that position must in any case have been sorely undermined by Sir Iain Vallance's public insistence on Thursday that he would not have voted Labour had he known it would hit BT for the windfall profits tax. For a company which must rely heavily on the goodwill of the new Government both to defend its present monopoly and to advance its aspirations in digital TV, this is a pretty silly thing to have said. One rival utility boss quips: "I would have voted Labour had I known BT was going to be hit as well."

BT is a utility and a monopoly, there is no reason to think it should escape just because it seems to be so blatantly accomplished one. Let's hope that Sir Iain's ill-judged remarks will stir Labour into a rather more fiercely pro-competition stance towards business than it indicated in opposition.

ice chiefs discussed two options for the privatisation of the organisation with senior Labour figures. One involved the sale of a 49 per cent stake, the other a 51 per cent sale but with the Government retaining a golden share. This would have allowed it to ring-fence services such as Royal Mail letter delivery, ensuring that the Post Office continued to provide a service to every address in the country at a uniform price.

Competition lawyers welcomed the development yesterday which they said would clarify the vexed relationship between regulators and the MMC.

The planned competition bill is intended to toughen the law on cartels and abuses of market power, shifting the UK's regime towards the prohibitive system used on the Continent.

shareholders in the company, would he have got this leg up?"

"It [Mr Wolfson's appointment] is not doing the job any good. He will never know how much of his success is due to his father. I don't like nepotism."

Mr Jones had earlier given more detailed information on Mr Wolfson's experience. He said that Mr Wolfson had joined the company in 1991 as a sales consultant. After three months he produced a report. As a result of that, Mr Jones took him on as his personal assistant. He became retail director in 1993 and was then promoted to head of marketing for the Next brand.

Speaking about his appointment, Mr Wolfson said: "My age is not the issue. The question is am I competent to do the job?"

Mr Jones said shareholders should have confidence in him as he had been doing the job for a year and a half and had introduced several successful changes.

Mr Jones said: "Next is my life. There is no way I would have made the appointment if I had thought it would jeopardise the business in any way."

Next shares jumped 26p to a high of 720p yesterday on an upbeat trading statement. Next said the performance in the first 4 weeks was in line with the last statement which showed that sales in Next retail were 19 per cent ahead of last year.

Hall of Fame Holdings, which is chaired by England's 1966 World Cup hat-trick scorer, Geoff Hurst, is seeking a listing on the Alternative Investment Market to raise £4m. The company said it planned to open a permanent attraction celebrating the legends of British football. The attraction will be located in the Pepsi Tradeo centre in London.

barratress is made all the worse by yesterday's move by Spain to cut its official interest rate by a quarter point, which some of our panel of economists said reflected its increased chances of joining the first wave of union.

But interpreting the German move on gold is not entirely clear cut. Robert Prior of James D. Wolfensohn & Co. suggests that both was a move for EMU. Any move by Mr. Waigel to use revealed gold reserves to offset public debt would only play into the hands of the Italians, who the Germans are reluctant to see join any early common currency, but are also on course for a 3.5 per cent deficit. "They have complained about Italy's fiddles and if they are going to start finding themselves in all strengthening Italy's hand," Mr Prior said.

Michael Lewis of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell pointed out that the gold story was not new, as Belgium and Holland have been selling their reserves for years in an attempt to meet the convergence criteria.

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Foreign Exchange Rates

STERLING	DOLLAR	D-MARK
100 = 168.79	100 = 154.05	100 = 154.05

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot
US	1,904.9	97	29.23	1,000	-	-	0.5589
Canada	2,270.7	95.50	161.123	1,243	30.28	85.94	0.8181
France	2,758.8	79.73	101.551	1,393	28.93	718.12	0.1050
Germany	1,984.0	65.20	736.705	1,580.7	10.93	-	0.1050
Italy	2749.8	90.26	20.42	1,683.3	15.5-22.4	41.0-51.0	397.046
Japan	190.45	105.10	370.242	116.13	36.85	167.05	0.8245
UK	1,429.5	90.42	10.42	1,419.5	14.15	42.75	0.5475
Belgium	57.511	59.13	59.44	35.580	0.5-5.5	24.5-21.5	2.0948
Denmark	10,612	235.250	590.720	4,650	128.107	300.340	30.844
Finland	5,519	59.42	59.42	1,432.5	10.40	130.194	1.1262
France	1,071.4	34	16.4	1,531.5	9.5	-	0.1463
Germany	11,280	330.250	550.630	7,030	105.128	432.402	4.142
Italy	236.07	21.11	69.51	143.30	0.5-0.7	10.3-4.7	0.8446
Japan	12.457	349.18	160.18	7,030.5	10.84	-	0.1463
Spain	2,828.2	70.91	291.279	1,430.5	10.47	149.143	0.9438
Australia	2,146	9.3	30.20	1,289.1	3-5	4.4	0.7521
Canada	2,758.8	80.58	101.551	7,757.7	11.23	22.47	4.5588
UK	4,095.9	0.4	-	2,400.0	1.24	-	0.1463
New Zealand	2,280.7	3.4	2.14	1,432.8	7.9	31.30	0.6474
Saudi Arabia	1,152.3	0.6	-	2,758.8	1.24	-	0.2095
Singapore	2,828.2	0.6	-	1,432.8	16.18	69.59	0.5475

OTHER SPOT RATES as of 10/25/87			OTHER SPOT RATES as of 10/25/87		
Country	Starting	Dollar	Country	Starting	Dollar
Argentina	1,840.5	0.599	Hong Kong	0.8177	0.5500
Brazil	19,675.1	11.9532	India	0.1815	0.3259
Canada	2,270.7	0.8759	Pakistan	0.0974	40.287
France	2,758.8	3.409	Philippines	42.5981	85.360
Germany	1,984.0	1.5411	Poland	1.2776	1.1276
Italy	2,749.8	0.9810	Russia	0.3702	3.6408
Japan	190.45	0.0051	Saudi Arabia	1.2776	0.6181
UK	1,429.5	271.320	South Africa	4.7833	0.9819
USA	95.250	35.8126	Taiwan	0.2000	27.8100
Yemen	0.4287	-	Thailand	0.0075	3.6745

*All rates are quoted against the dollar as they are current (last quoted) rates from our sources.
 †All rates are quoted against the dollar as they are current (last quoted) rates from our sources.
 ‡All rates are quoted against the dollar as they are current (last quoted) rates from our sources.

Tourist Rates as of 15/03/97

C. Buys		C. Buys		C. Buys	
Australia (Dollars)	2,050	France (Francs)	9,1075	New Zealand (Dollars)	2,2675
Austria (Schillings)	79,0400	Germany (Marks)	2,7040	Norway (Kroner)	11,2225
Belgium (Francs)	53,8500	Greece (Drachmas)	438,0000	Portugal (Escudos)	271,7500
Canada (Dollars)	2,2250	Hong Kong (Dollars)	12,3650	Spain (Pesetas)	227,0000
Cyprus (Pounds)	0,8020	Ireland (Pounds)	1,0460	Sweden (Kronor)	12,1875

Denmark (Krone)	10.3650	Italy (Lira)	2687.0000	Switzerland (Franc)	2.2810
Holland (Guilder)	3.0360	Japan (Yen)	187.4000	Turkey (Lira)	21.7680.0000
France (Franc)	8.2500	West (Lira)	0.8010	United States (Dollar)	1.6075

UK Suez	Germany Discount	2.50%	US Prime Discount	8.75%	Japan Discount	0.50%
France Intervention	London Canada	4.50%	Fixed Funds	5.00%	Belgium Discount	2.50%

Italy	7.5%	Finns	4.75%	Spain		Central	3.00%
Discount		Discount	5.00%	10-Day Repo	5.50%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Discount		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
Advances	2.70%	Discount	3.25%	Repo (Avg)	4.10%	Lombard	4.125%

Country	5 yr	Yield %	10 yr	yield %	Country	5 yr	Yield %	10 yr	yield %
UK	7.0%	6.88	7.25%	7.03	Netherlands	8.25%	4.88	5.75%	5.67
US	6.65%	6.62	6.25%	6.75	Spain	7.80%	5.71	7.35%	6.54

Japan	5.50%	1.88	2.50%	2.58	Italy	6.25%	6.88	6.75%	7.24
Australia	10.0%	7.22	6.75%	7.60	Belgium	9.0%	4.81	6.25%	5.85
Germany	8.0%	4.71	6.0%	5.77	Sweden	13.0%	5.74	5.50%	6.94
France	7.25%	4.67	5.50%	5.63	ECU OAT	6.0%	4.76	5.50%	6.04

Source: HSBC Markets Research Yields calculated on local basis. ** Denotes new benchmarks

	O'Night	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	2 7/8	3 1/8	3 1/8	3 1/8	3 1/8	3 1/8

Local Gov	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4
Local Authority Depts	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4
Decommissioning Depts	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Gov	-	-	5.63	5.66	5.77	6.07	6.07
EDU Limited Dep	-	-	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4

Contract		Settlement price	High/Low for day	Est/Conts traded	Open interest
Long Gilt	(Jan 97)	114-14	114-16 113-28	87800	276357

Gallen Gvt Bd	(Jun 97)	102.97	102.50	102.10	184073	268464
German Gvt	(Jun 97)	130.21	130.54	129.59	68555	118048
Japan Gvt Bd	(Jun 97)	123.82	123.68	123.61	5204	n/a
3 Mth Starting	(Jun 97)	93.48	93.48	93.46	6339	116598
	(Sep 97)	93.27	93.25	93.23	13646	106532
3 Mth Eurmark	(Jun 97)	96.80	96.81	96.80	16324	225280

3 Mth Europe	(Sep 97)	86.76	86.77	96.74	18884	206329
	(Jun 97)	92.30	93.86	93.26	24870	105705
3 Mth Euroyen	(Sep 97)	83.63	83.68	93.61	13767	98464
	(Jun 97)	89.13	89.15	98.15	210	n/a
3 Mth Euroswiss	(Sep 97)	85.19	86.23	98.19	3637	46476
	(Jun 97)	89.17	90.23	98.17	5829	39172

FTSE 100	Jun 97	85.82	85.82	85.82	503	7216
FTSE 250	Jun 97	4896.0	4896.0	4896.0	503	5085
	Jun 97	4850.0	4896.0	4896.0	14290	7058
					0	8138

Little FTSE 100 Index Option

Series	4800	4850	4700	4750	Total/voles
May	83/1	34/2	3/25	1/75	--
Jun	157/42	102/57	71/77	47/105	--

Jul	172/80	139/78	106/68	81/124	--
Aug	184/131	152/96	122/117	98/144	110/161

Commodities as of 15/02/97

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London Metal Exchange					
%/tonne	Cash	3 mths	Volume	LME Stocks	chg
Aluminium HG	1625.0-50.5	1654.0-55.0	113818	772000	3150
Nickelium May	1400.0-60.0	1510.0-15.0	1156	65740	440
Copper A	2503.0-50.0	2450.0-50.0	42008	152125	525

Lead	\$145.55	6280-7.9	5824	156975	-	800
Nickel	7635-7685	7770-7775	25470	80818	+	132
Tin	5715-5725	5760-5770	4986	11370	-	180
Zinc	1327 p-28.5	1348.0-47.0	17734	487275	-	2400
Domestic Conversion exchange opp:	2x 1.5404	SDA 1.5913	2x 1.683	Stock volumes & change in tonnes as at Tue 13 May		

PRECIOUS METALS								
per troy oz.	\$	£	Coins	\$	£		\$	£
Platinum	368.50	239.66	Britannia	369	225	Krughands	348/359	211/218
Palladium	172.95	105.25	Britannia 5 oz.	190	116	Sows	80/60	49/55
Silver spot	4.8350	2.9445	Britannia 25 oz.	190	55	Nobles	391/408	239/249

Gold Bull		348.40	217.091	Britannia 10 oz	41	25	Maple Leaf	352.869	215.025
									Source: Scotia & Son
AGRICULTURAL as at 10/05/87									
Cocoa		Coffee		Rice		Potatoes		Potatoes	
LIFF	Chenne	LIFF	Chenne	LIFF	Chenne	LIFF	Chenne	ATA	Chenne

May	1002	May	1873	May	98.00	Jun	30.0	Vol.	
Jul	1018	Jul	1933	Sep	99.20	Nov	57.50	May	10.00
Sep	1036	Sep	1893	Nov	91.00	Mar	107.00	Jun	10.70
Vol	4713	Vol	7678	Vol	54	Vol	54	Vol	280
White Sugar		Freight		Wheat		Corn			100.00

LIFFE	\$/tonne	LIFFE	\$/cwt	LIFFE	\$/tonne	CBOT	¢/bushel	\$/bushel
Aug	\$17.80	May	1280	May	82.85	Hi-Lo		Total
Oct	\$37.70	Jun	1225	Jul	91.50	May	288.75-284.50	286.50
Dec	\$35.80	Vol	188	Sep	92.02	Jul	29-420-281.76	282.00
Vol	2217	Index	1281	Vol	818	Sep	289.10-287.25	287.75

Other Softs (Agricultural) as at 15/05/97				Source: CME			
May	Maize (No.3)**	\$/tonne	108.0	May	Soybean Oil	FL/100kg	101.50
May	Copra (N)	\$/tonne	181.0	May	Copra Oil (F)	\$/tonne	570.0
Jul	Cotton (N)	UScent/lb	72.50	unq	Sunflower Oil	\$/tonne	unq
					Peanut Oil	\$/tonne	540.50

Jan	Wool	Acquiring	Jan	Represents Oil	NOTING	10000
Jun	Robber	Meaning	May	Groundnut Oil	Shrimp	990.0
Origin: SOUTHERN - early origin - Philippines/Indonesia *Malaysia **N Europe Source: FT Information/Reuters						
ENERGY as at 13/05/87						
Brent Crude	(\$/barrel)	Gasoil	(\$/tonne)	WTI	Products †	(\$/tonne)

FE	5.30pm	Yr ago	FE	close	+1.25	Spex	Spot CR North West Europe
Jun	19.34	+0.01	Jun	172.00	+1.25	Jun	21.30 Prem Unleaded 2000/02
Jul	19.42	+0.20	Jul	173.75	+1.75	Jul	21.25 Naphtia 1992/93
Aug	19.44	+0.24	Aug	175.75	+2.00	Aug	21.15 EG Gasoil 1747/77
Vol	50220	Index	19.35	Vol	10820	Aug	20.90 Shell Oil

*When 5.00pm previous day. Year ago prices show savings for week. * Source: KCB-London Oil Reports. †Basis prices							
COMMODITY INDICES							
%CBCL indices							
	Basis date	+Spot	%Day Chg	Dec 31st	%Yr to dch	Year ago	%Yr chg
Index	1887m/100	188.26	-0.29	216.28	-7.42	210.42	-5.29

Agribusiness	1970-198	261.66	+0.81	231.25	+13.25	264.54	-19.51
Energy	1969-198	70.55	-0.96	95.86	-17.83	70.10	+0.63
Industrial Metals	1977-198	198.63	+0.69	166.79	+11.67	191.76	-4.63
Livestock	1970-198	125.80	-0.26	191.03	+2.50	192.25	+1.06
Precious Metals	1973-198	446.40	+0.03	468.94	-3.69	500.77	-12.05

100 Largest Insurance Funds

Address	City	State	Zip	Phone	Year	Model	Price	Options
Adams Equity Star 4	• 290-2		371.5			Large & General Mastered Accts	1098.0	1125.0
Adams Equity Star 4	• 290-2		371.5			London & Mastered Flexible Acct	722.0	
Abbey Maryland Star 4	• 357.9		382.2			London Equity	1200.00	
Abbey National Maryland	153.9		162.0			London Island	751.80	
Abbey National UK Equity	188.5		175.5			M & S Maryland Bond Acc	1083.2	1137.5
Abbey National UK Equity	2114.8		2226.9			M & S Recovery Bond Acc	989.4	1017.2

Priority Mail® by Air® S	136.1	137.0	Midwest Chemicals Inc.	107.3	113.0
United Parcel Distribution Snc	26.0	26.0	Midwest Food	129.9	129.9
United Parcel Equity A	169.4	169.3	Midwest Life Equity	125.5	125.5
United Parcel Corp. & High Income S	45.6	45.6	Midwest Growth Manager	162.5	162.2
United Parcel Corp. S	141.6	140.9	Midwest Specialty Mfg	135.0	142.0
United Parcel Property S	297.7	297.0	Midwest LRV Equity	179.2	180.6
AXA Equity & Low Risk S	539.3	537.0	Northwest Union Mgr Sd NJMAN MF	1889.2	1893.4

ACA Equity & Law Div Bar S	108.09	118.30	Norwich Union Unifund Managed	108.57	129.58
ACA Equity & Law Div Bar S II	1491.10	1509.40	Norwest Union Limited With Profit	170.08	175.94
ACA Equity & Law UK Div S46 S	1405.19	1479.00	NPI Managed	919.9	951.4
Barclays Equity Acc	1201.0	1264.5	Pearl Equity Mgt	377.7	391.9
Barclays International Acc	485.5	511.1	Peter Managed	362.7	366.7
Barclays Managed Acc	698.2	724.3	Pfunders Managed	453.9	472.9
	196.3	196.3	Prudential Profit And Loss 2	1006.6	1062.6

Black Home Mortgage Inc	404.61			498.06	529.81
Black Home Mortgage Inc SE	817.48			868.09	284.89
Black Home Mortgage Inc	507.8	925.4	Royal Scottish Growth Managed	213.6	
CMFPA Fund for 2	444.5	487.8	Royal Scottish UK Equity	228.2	205.0
CMFPA Fund	362.4	368.8	Scottish American Equity Ser 1	915.5	895.6
CMFPA Structured Fund			Scottish American Managed Ser 1	339.0	338.3
CM with Profit Bond	111.8	111.9	Scottish European Asset	338.2	354.0
Confederation Equity 1	285.0	247.4			

Commercial Union Managed	513.7	640.0	Scottish Life and Safety	316.0	360.0
Commercial Union UK Equity	707.1	707.1	Scottish Mutual Society	266.0	266.0
Commercial Union With Profit	140.1	147.5	Scott Trust Investment Corp	244.0	231.0
Simple Share Mortgage 2	235.0	245.0	Scottish Widows International	137.1	137.1
Family Performance	177.0	185.2	Scottish Widows Ireland	590.5	528.2
Prudential Provident Managed	402.2	494.5	Scottish Widows Mixed	594.6	615.4
Prudential Provident Managed	601.3	601.8	Standard Pacific	1430.0	592.4

Florida Acquisition Unit Corp	213.5	224.9	Standard European	214.7	228.1
Florida Pacific Corp	185.0	195.0	Standard Fed Inst	175.1	185.4
Florida Acquisition With Profit	172.5	177.1	Standard Fed Inst	474.1	480.1
GA Power Mutual Eq Cnd	1000.0	1059.0	Standard Merged	521.2	562.7
GA Power Mutual Mgtl Cnd	615.7	645.1	Sun Alliance Equity	1339.7	1399.0
Gao Merged	380.9	401.0	Sun Alliance Merged	809.2	854.4
GRI Equity Acc	1434.7	1510.2			

GTE International Acc.	761.8	853.4	Sun Life Universal Distribution	216.0	265.0
GTE International Acc.	879	852.2	Sun Life Distribution	362.0	362.0
Hill Samuel Estab.	1053.3	988.1	Sun Life Equity Acc.	2077.1	2123.3
Hill Samuel International Ser A	7052.3	781.8	Sun Life Life Insurance Acc.	1156.1	1217.2
Int'l Life Global Mkt Print Ser 3	199.7	781.8	Sun Life Cash Surrender Etd		162.5
J. Pennington & Co. Plans Mkt	199.7	220.0	Staco Life Cash Surrender Etd		183.0
Life Insurance Co. of N.Y. Acc.	363.9	361.5	Sun Life Cash Mktg. Loan Etd Acc.	716.3	726.1

[illegible]

— *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1991

[illegible]

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sport

LIONS TOUR '97: For the first trip of the professional era to be a success, the past victories and defeats in South Africa need to be forgotten, says **Chris Hewett** who, below, profiles Eric Miller – the youngest of the party – and Ieuan Evans – the oldest

History casts a long shadow

Martin Johnson will spend the next eight weeks of his life attempting to remove a rogue gallery of hairy-chested Springboks from the general vicinity of his neck, so the last thing he needs is an albatross attaching itself to his shirt collar the moment he touches down in Johannesburg tomorrow. Especially one the size of Fran Cotton.

Johnson is the archetypal nut and bolts man: there is nothing fancy or overblown about him, nothing grandiose or pretentious. No discernible sense of history, either, for his occasional public utterances have contained few references to the broader issues thrown up by the 11th Lions tour of South Africa to be undertaken since W E MacLagan's party blazed the trail in 1891.

In short, the captain is a model tunnel-visioned professional for whom professionalism means a whole lot more than the £10,000 wedge in his back pocket. In Johnson's definition, the word conjures a simple image of a job of work waiting to be completed with a minimum of fuss and only a modicum of bother. Satisfaction will be achieved by getting out there and doing the business. Other people can do the talking.

Johnson, however, will be looking at history every time he claps eyes on Cotton, his larger than life manager, and, to a slightly lesser extent, Ian McGeechan, his coach. Both served under Willie John McBride when the 1974 Lions played their sporting manhood and Cotton, one of the arch-destroyers of a supposedly great Springbok pack, has deliberately created this latest squad in that glorious image.

The tales of bravery and derring-do are trotted out as frequently today as they were on McBride's return home some 23 years ago; indeed, they were common currency this week as the Lions indulged in their make bonding session in Weybridge before flying south today. Willie John, the '99' call, the fights, the battles, the wars, mass retaliation, subjugation and triumph: for many, 1974 revisited would do very nicely thank-you.

On Thursday, when the Lions spoke collectively for the first time about the three-Test series awaiting them, there was much discussion of life among the mud and bullets – of meeting fire with fire, of standing firm in the face of intimidation, of not being pushed around – and precious little of the wit, pace and imagination that will also

be required if Gary Teichmann's gifted and highly motivated band of Boks are to be tamed. The message was clear: these Lions are serious.

Yet they must very quickly reach the conclusion that history is bunk, for the game has changed beyond recognition since Gordon Brown removed an Orange Free State second-row's glass eye with a right hook. The age of home-town refereeing, bar-room brawling and official under-the-carpet silences has given way to an era of pro-active touch-judges, after-match criticism and trial by video. This tour will be hard, perhaps brutally so, but it will also be more open to scrutiny than any that have gone before.

No one need tell Johnson that 1974 will count for nothing when Test day dawns in Cape Town on 21 June, but Cotton needs to reinforce that truth with all the sincerity he can muster. A big, warm, affable

Lions itinerary and squad

24 May: Eastern Province Invitational XV (Port Elizabeth)
28 May: Border (East London)
31 May: Western Province (Cape Town)
4 June: S E Transvaal (Witbank)
7 June: Northern Transvaal (Pretoria)
11 June: Transvaal (Johannesburg)
14 June: Natal (Durban)
17 June: Emerging Springboks (Willingdon)
21 June: SOUTH AFRICA (First Test, Cape Town)
24 June: Free State (Bloemfontein)
28 June: SOUTH AFRICA (Second Test, Durban)
1 July: Northern Free State (Mellmoth)
5 July: SOUTH AFRICA (Third Test, Johannesburg)

TOUR PARTY: Backus: N Jervis, T Stanger, T Underwood, H Bell, J Barclay, J Smit, A Bame, S Gibbs, J Guscott, W Grewerwood, P Grayson, G Townsend, M Dawson, A Healey, A Howley, F. van der Merwe, D Young, G Rowlands, J Smith, P Wallis, M Reaugh, H Wood, S Williams, S Sruwe, M Johnson (capt), J Davidson, D Wier, R Hill, R O'Connell, L Delgado, E Miller, T Fletcher, S O'Connell, N Black.

character possessed of natural gifts as a communicator, the manager is also an unashamed defender of the values and traditions of the game. If he lives in the present, he breathes deeply of the past. His task over the next two months is to put old glories on the back burner and get modern.

If he succeeds, Cotton can play a significant role in securing a meaningful future for the Lions. While International Board delegates have given their blessing to a four-yearly cycle of tours – plans are already being laid for the visit to New Zealand and Australia in 2001 – a severe hiding from South Africa would undoubtedly undermine the kudos and prestige still contained in every thread of the famous red shirt. To keep the flame burning brightly, this party needs to compete.

Thanks to the runaway success of the World Cup, the Lions are having to get used to sharing the top branch of the rugby tree. The high regard in which they are currently held is derived directly from the weakness of Ireland, Scotland and Wales as individual rugby nation states. For the Springboks, the All Blacks and the Wallabies, genuine Test intensity is in short supply north of the equator – the French sometimes provide it in their own backyard, England only rarely.

A Lions series victory against the odds would, therefore, work wonders in concentrating the elitist minds of the southern superpowers, but it is even remotely on the cards?

In the view of Joel Stransky, the non-pareil Springbok outside-half inexplicably marginalised by his country's selectors, the Lions may well find the three Tests more to their liking than many of the 10 provincial torments to which they will be subjected. That there has a ring of truth to it, for it is far easier to imagine a fully-equipped Saturday side grinding out a narrow victory or two than the mid-week dirt-trackers prevailing over the might of Transvaal or the furies of the Free State.

Cotton and his fellow selectors will mix and match for the first three games – Eastern Province, Border and Western Province – before deciding on the main men. Those left out in the cold will have to carry the can in some distinctly dangerous territory and there is an obvious risk of history repeating itself. Four years ago in New Zealand, the midweek effort collapsed in embarrassing disarray and the effect on squad morale was ruinous.

It is, of course, perfectly true that the success of this tour will be measured by the Test results alone. Bill Beaumont's 1980 Lions, admirably equipped up front but found wanting outside the scrum, won all 14 provincial games in South Africa and were good enough to push the Springboks in each of the four internationals, yet they lost the rubber 3-1 and went down in the annals as failures.

But it is that series, rather than the 1974 conflagration, that will set the tone over the next couple of months. The Springboks may have beaten Beaumont but not by much, certainly not by a margin sufficient to exorcise the ghost of McBride. Teichmann's men are not looking for mere victory over the Lions, they are looking to humiliate them. History cuts both ways, after all.



First-time tourist Eric Miller (left) and Ieuan Evans, who is making his third Lions trip, come together at training yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

Straddling the generation gap

Young and old, chalk and cheese, a novice loose forward on the threshold of fame and fortune, a seasoned threequarter with a memory bank chock-full of golden reminiscences. Eleven years, six months and three days separate Eric Miller, the fresh-faced toddler of the Lions party, and Ieuan Evans, the wizened elder statesman. In terms of experience, 11 centuries would be a more appropriate margin.

At 33, Evans the tourist has been there and done it all for the Lions, not once but twice: Australia in 1989, when a series-winning try in Sydney left David Campese with a hint of rouge on his cheeks, followed by a compelling struggle with Va'anga Tuqumala in New Zealand four years later. The last time Miller went on tour, he visited Zimbabwe with his Dublin schoolmates.

Indeed Miller, christened "Baby Deano" by the Leicester faithful this season, had yet to lay a hand on a rugby ball at the time Evans was giving the Wallabies the slip and sending Bob Dwyer, the Australian coach, purple-faced in apoplectic fury.

The fact that Dwyer now coaches the 21-year-old Irishman at Welford Road is just another strand in the tangled web of inter-personal relationships that endows top-flight rugby.

"It was Gaelic football and soccer for me in the early days," Miller recalled this week. "In my early teens, I wouldn't have been able to name a Lion, or even tell you who the Lions were. Sounds terrible, doesn't it? But until I was 14 and I went to boarding school in Dublin, rugby just didn't figure in my life."

"This time last year, I was still wondering exactly what I could expect to achieve in this game, if anything. I wasn't playing big rugby at either club or provincial level – not with any regularity, anyway – and I'd found the whole season pretty disappointing. So I set myself two bold targets: to win a first team place at Leicester and get myself a first cap for Ireland. I wasn't at all sure I'd get close to either, but here I am on a Lions tour."

Miller's prodigious footballing talent, allied to a versatility that allows him to perform

any of the three back row roles with equal facility, could well make him one of the most influential players in South Africa. He can run, pass, jump, ruck, maul and tackle. What is more, he possesses a left boot to die for. "Even Joel Stransky stands aside when we need a decent clearance kick from close to the right touchline," says Neil Back, his fellow Tiger.

'In my early teens I wouldn't have been able to name a Lion'
– Eric Miller

Evans will see rather less of the ball than his colleague in the coming weeks, but there are few tourists more certain of a Test place than the former Welsh captain. Like Miller, he spent a large part of the domestic campaign assuming he would watch the Lions from afar – not because he feared the selectors

would pass him over, but because Kathryn, his fiancée, was expecting their first child. When the time came to make a decision, however, the old competitive instinct took hold.

"Of course there was a doubt," said the suitably besotted father of six-week-old Lili, "but this is special for a rugby player, isn't it?" "Forget the age business. If you can't dredge up some adrenaline for a tour like this, there is something badly wrong. I grew up with the Lions. I can remember getting out of bed in the middle of the night to watch them play a Test in New Zealand or South Africa. The magic never fades."

"It's been a gruelling season and it doesn't get any easier once you're past 30, that's for sure. But I picked up a couple of injuries this time round and, to be honest, they work wonders for your rest and recuperation. Now I understand why Gareth Edwards used to depend on his 'Christmas hamstrung' every year. I'm slowly building up a repertoire of my own."

In Evans' view, the fascination of this tour lies in the

mutual unfamiliarity of the 35-man squad. "It's very different atmosphere from '89 or '93. On the last tour, the vast majority of the squad had been in Australia four years previously, so we knew each other backwards. This time, there are only a handful of previous Lions, four or five at most, and because the club season has stopped us meeting up for weekend get-togethers as we did in the past, we've had to spend the whole of this week introducing ourselves."

"Still, I'm sure we'll gel very quickly. On Lions tours, there tend to be defining moments when the party becomes a real team. In '89, it happened against the Australian Capital Territory when we turned around a 23-point deficit and in '93, we did something similar against the Maoris."

Ah yes, the game Evans transformed with some bizarre round-the-houses running – back, across and finally forwards to the line. He smiles at the memory. "Listen," he says. "If you had half a dozen Maoris up your arse, you'd run backwards and sideways, too."

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Knicks pay the price for brawl

Basketball

One of the ugliest play-off games of all time brought a tough response from the National Basketball Association yesterday, with five New York Knicks players being handed one-game suspensions and the Miami Heat forward PJ Brown banned for two and fined \$10,000 (£6,200).

The in-form Knicks centre Patrick Ewing was among the five players carpeted following the bust-up during the last two minutes of Miami's 96-81 Eastern Conference semi-final victory on Wednesday night.

The result saved Miami from elimination, with Knicks leading the best-of-seven series 3-2. The winners play the defending champions, Chicago Bulls, in the final.

A wrestling match broke out

when Brown bodyslammed the Miami guard, Charlie Ward. The forward John Wallace grabbed Brown from behind and several Knicks players came off the bench to join in the struggle. "They're a dirty bunch of guys," Brown said. "I told Charlie [Ward]: 'If you want to play football, go back to Florida State.'"

Ward is a former college quarterback. The Knicks players Ewing, Allan Houston, Larry Johnson and John Starks were suspended for leaving the bench during an altercation.

"All of our players served as peacekeepers and the reason they came out was to protect one of their own," Knicks president, Ernie Grunfeld, said. "It's sad that they have to be suspended. The reason they did it was the right reason."

Along with the suspensions, Knicks were fined \$20,000 –

\$5,000 for each player who left the bench area. Starks was fined an additional \$5,000 for making an obscene gesture to the crowd.

None of the suspended players will be allowed to attend the remaining play-off games. "I'm going to be home. Unfortunately, I can't come to the game," Ewing said. "It's going to be tough."

However, because NBA rules require a team to have at least nine front-line players available for a play-off game, the league decided the suspensions of Ewing, Houston, Johnson and Starks would be split between two games and served in alphabetical order.

Ewing and Houston, Knicks' top two play-off scorers, missed game six in New York last night, along with Ward, who has been providing the offence with much needed inspiration.

Bulls delay early return for Paul

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

Bradford Bulls, needing only to maintain their momentum in Super League in order to win the title, are not yet expecting to be boosted by Robbie Paul's return ahead of schedule.

Bradford feared their scrum-half and captain could be out for up to six weeks after damaging his foot at Wembley but his recovery has been so fast that he has hinted this week he had a chance of playing at Warrington tomorrow night. The club is proceeding with considerable more caution, insisting that there is "no chance whatever" that he could play.

Paul Medley and Jeff Wittenberg are both back in the Bulls' squad, but there is no place for Paul Cook.

Warrington will be without Toa Kohe-Love, who was linked with a possible move to Halifax in part-exchange for Paul Rowley this week. He has a shoulder injury and is replaced by the teenager, Paul Wingfield, who makes his full debut.

Halifax will check on the fitness of Asa Amone before their home game against Wigan, who hope to have both Neil Cowie and Terry O'Connor fit at prop. Even if they are both available, Wigan's recent signing, Lee Hansen, will hold his place after an impressive display against London last week.

Leeds keep the same starting line-up up that won well at Salford for their visit to Oldham, but Andy Hay, recruited from Sheffield Eagles this week, comes in as a substitute in place of the injured Terry Newton. Castleford, without a point,

have the Great Britain tourist, Jason Critchley, available after completing his transfer from the Keighley Cougars. He is likely to start on the bench against Salford, alongside the club captain Lee Crooks, who has recovered from a knee operation.

Salford are without Scott Naylor, another knee injury victim, with Scott Martin moving up from the bench to replace him.

In today's one Super League fixture, Paris St-Germain have a chance to bring up their first "double" against their favourite opponents, Sheffield. Paris beat the Eagles in their first-ever game last year and got on top of them again at the start of this season. Another victory would be the ideal welcome for Andy Goodway, who is expected to be invited to become the club's new coach today.

Hightown left hanging on to early lead

Hockey

Yana Williams, Hightown's Welsh international, scored twice within minutes of coming on as a substitute as the English club built up a 3-0 lead within the opening 25 minutes of their first game yesterday in the A Division of the European Club Championship against the Russian champions, Donchanka, writes Bill Colwill from Wassenaar, The Netherlands.

Hightown, although starting with a defensive line-up, began in aggressive fashion, with Maggie Souyave and Tina Cullen combining well to create a number of chances. The Russians always looked dangerous on the break and, but for good saves by Carolyn Reid, might have taken an early lead, but it was Cullen who put Hightown ahead in the 16th minute with a well-struck penalty corner.

A splendid move started by Fiona Lee in midfield sent Cullen away to provide the cross for the first of Williams' goals. Lee also initiated the move for Williams' second goal four minutes later, but within a minute slack marking in the English defence gave the Russians their first goal through Olga Oushokova.

After the interval Hightown were pinned in their own half and only some desperate defending by Caroline Gilbert and Reid kept them at bay until the 45th minute when Melina Thegurdasova pulled a second back.

A relieved Cullen said: "I am thrilled to bits. It was a bit frantic at the end but we held out." Hightown: C. Reid, M. Morris, C. Gilbert, L. Carr, K. Walsh, L. Houscombe, F. Lee, M. Lyndon, M. Souyave, T. Cullen (capt). Substitute used: Y. Williams.

Donchanka: G. Mouskova; I. Shalidova; O. Lashina; G. Timonina; T. Timonina; O. Tereshina; Y. Thegurdasova; S. Houskova; M. Thegurdasova; P. Kouskova; O. Oushokova.

Umpires: M. Power (H) and H. Evans (R).

Whitaker has edge over Dutchmen

Equestrianism

GENEVIEVE MURPHY reports from Windsor

Although he is resting his top two horses, Virtual Village Wham and Grannusch, John Whitaker still won yesterday's Land Rover Great Park Stakes on the third day of the Royal Windsor Horse Show.

This time Whitaker was riding the Hungarian-bred grey stallion Randi, who sped round clear to defeat two Dutchmen: Bert Romp on Burg's Mr Blue and Wout Jan van der Schans on Goldenbridge. Robert Smith was fourth on Senator for the Best, who was just 0.1sec slower than the horse above him.

Since time was decisive in the opening round, Whitaker reckoned that the course was big. "I don't think the average speed horse would have been up to it," he said. "Randi is different, he's capable of jumping in a grand prix and he's very careful."

At home in his native Hungary, Randi had won eight Volvo World Cup qualifiers before being sold into Jan Tops' yard in the Netherlands. It was there that Whitaker first encountered him three years ago.

"I had gone to look at another horse when Jan asked me to try Randi as he thought he might suit me," Whitaker said. Tops was proved right – the Yorkshireman liked the stallion immediately and bought him.

Tomorrow, when the home team contests the Nations Cup, Whitaker will have an unaccustomed place on the sidelines. He had told the selectors that he did not want to make Virtual Village Wham and Grannusch available for the team.

These were the two horses he rode when he was runner-up in the Volvo World Cup Final at

the beginning of the month. Both are in their late teens and he believed that they deserved a rest.

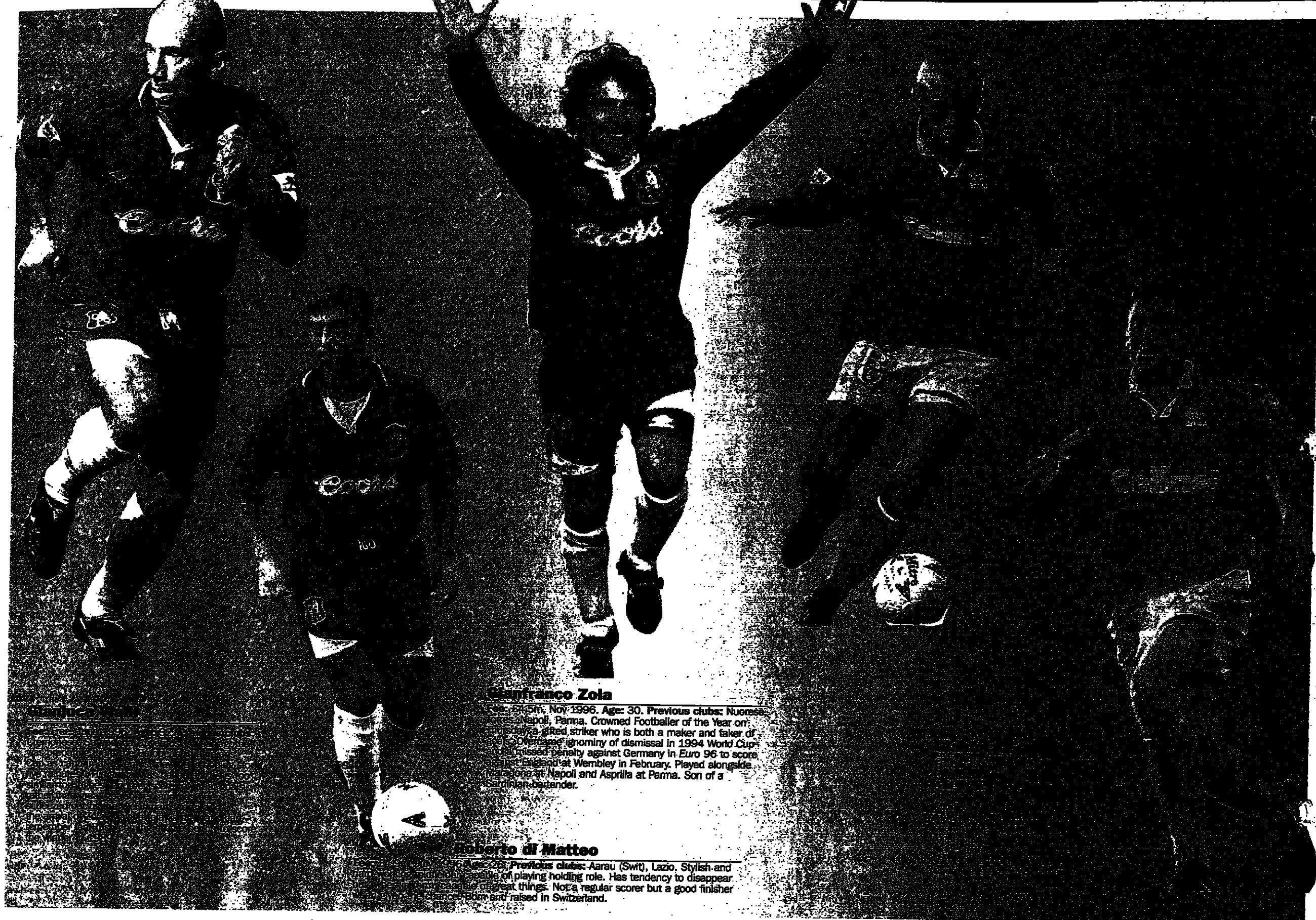
The four British team members will be Michael Whitaker, Nick Skelton, Geoff Billington and Smith. Participation in the team contest could give them an edge over the elder Whitaker brother as they strive to accumulate points for the leading rider prize of a Land Rover Discovery. Points will be awarded for jumping clear rounds in the Nations Cup and they could prove crucial.

There is no need, however, to be distressed on the elder Whitaker's behalf. He has already won more than 60 cars in his career, four of them in the last six months.

ROYAL WINDSOR HORSE SHOW (Best)
Land Rover Great Park Stakes: A. Virtual Village Wham (J. Whitaker, GB) clear, 54.25s; B. Burg's Mr Blue (B. Romp, Neth) clear, 56.25s; C. Goldenbridge (W. Jan van der Schans, Neth) clear, 57.05s; Wout Jan van der Schans (Mr Blue) (J. Whitaker, GB) 4 faults in first round; 3 faults in second round; 4 faults in third round; 4 faults in fourth round; 4 faults in fifth round; 4 faults in sixth round; 4 faults in seventh round; 4 faults in eighth round; 4 faults in ninth round; 4 faults in tenth round; 4 faults in eleventh round; 4 faults in twelfth round; 4 faults in thirteenth round; 4 faults in fourteenth round; 4 faults in fifteenth round; 4 faults in sixteenth round; 4 faults in seventeenth round; 4 faults in eighteenth round; 4 faults in nineteenth round; 4 faults in twentieth round; 4 faults in twenty-first round; 4 faults in twenty-second round; 4 faults in twenty-third round; 4 faults in twenty-fourth round; 4 faults in twenty-fifth round; 4 faults in twenty-sixth round; 4 faults in twenty-seventh round; 4 faults in twenty-eighth round; 4 faults in twenty-ninth round; 4 faults in thirtieth round; 4 faults in thirty-first round; 4 faults in thirty-second round; 4 faults in thirty-third round; 4 faults in thirty-fourth round; 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sport

FA CUP FINAL



Gianfranco Zola

DOB: 1966, Nov 1996. Age: 30. Previous clubs: Nuoro, Parma, Napoli, Parma. Crowned Footballer of the Year on 1996. A gifted striker who is both a maker and taker of goals. Overcame ignominy of dismissal in 1994 World Cup. Scored penalty against Germany in Euro 96 to score Chelsea's first goal at Wembley in February. Played alongside Roberto di Matteo and Asprilla at Parma. Son of a Sicilian lawyer.

Roberto di Matteo

DOB: 1968, Nov 1996. Age: 28. Previous clubs: Aarau (Swit), Lazio. Stylish and powerful. Capable of playing holding role. Has tendency to disappear when the going gets tough. Not a regular scorer but a good finisher. Born in Switzerland and raised in Switzerland.

Azzurri return to the twin towers

When the FA Cup kicked off with its preliminary round in August, the most exotic thing about it was the name of one of the competing teams, Viking Sports. Today, 572 matches later, there will be more foreign players on the pitch than Englishmen.

There will be the first Brazilians to play in a final, the first Romanian, a Dane, one or two Norwegians, a Frenchman and maybe a Slovakian. Most of all, there will be Italians. After 115 finals without one, today they will be everywhere. There will be Italians in red and blue, in defence, midfield and attack, on the substitutes' bench, in the crowd and, in vast numbers, in the press box.

Italians have previously taken little more than a passing interest in the FA Cup but, said Cesare Maldini this week, "this year it's going to be something else". The Italian national coach, who will be at Wembley to watch his five internationals, added: "Our players have made a terrific contribution to English football."

Some more than others. While Gianfranco Zola is Footballer of the Year, Gianluca Vialli has become the season's most famous substitute. Roberto di Matteo has been effective but low-key. In Middlesbrough Fabrizio Ravanelli has scored heavily in the cups but neither he, nor Gianluca Festa, have been able to save Boro from relegation.

Ravanelli will be playing his last game for Middlesbrough today (unless there is a replay), and Festa may also leave.

The difference in the fortunes of the clubs is marked and has much to do with the way their foreign players have been integrated – or not. At Chelsea even Vialli, despite apparent provocation from Ruud Gullit, has been diplomatic outside the club and a good influence within. At Middlesbrough, Ravanelli has been quoted making critical remarks so often you feel there must be substance to them. He and Festa have also caused resentment by preferring medical treatment in Italy to using club staff.

Poor results obviously account for part of the difference, but there is more to it than that. Chelsea have had two great advantages over Boro. One is location. Ravanelli may live in an idyllic village in the Cleveland hills, but Ken Bates is probably right to suggest, with characteristic bluntness: "It's easier for foreign players to adapt to London than a northern outpost. It must be a great culture shock going from Rome to Middlesbrough compared to Rome to London."

All Chelsea's foreigners rave about London. Vialli may want to leave Chelsea, but he does not want to leave the capital.

The other advantage is experience. Chelsea have been signing foreign-

There will be many nationalities on the pitch today, but, says **Glenn Moore**, the biggest contribution made by England's World Cup group leaders, Italy

ers since Ken Monkou and Erland Johnsen arrived in 1989. The first non-English speaker, Dimitri Kharin, arrived three years later. Dealing with their problems – Kharin was burgled in his first week – has given them the experience to set up a structure to look after the foreign players. This involves Gwyn Williams, the assistant manager, helping with the major aspects and Denise Summers, the personnel manager, doing the day-to-day nursemaid.

An example of how these little details matter arose at Chelsea's Christmas party. When the Kharin family said they could not come, Summers

did some investigating and discovered that, the previous year, Chelsea's "Santa" had told Kharin's son that next year he would have to stand up and tell a story. Five-year-old Igor was apparently so panic-stricken at the thought the family decided not to come.

Summers then wrote a letter from Father Christmas explaining that he "was very sorry but I am so busy this year I won't be able to hear your story. I hope you don't mind not doing it this year." Igor then enjoyed the party. Roberto di Matteo's blind sister has also been made very welcome, while Zola's father was happily roaming the training ground on Thursday.

Boro did not sign any foreigners from 1986, when they were reformed, to 1994. They then brought in Uwe Fuchs and Jan Åge Fjørtoft, who had both already been playing in England, and Jaime Moreno, a young Bolivian. Though they will have learned from the experience of Moreno, who was not a success, they do not appear to have set up a settling-in process like Chelsea's. Juninho has settled well, but he brought his family with him. Emerson's girlfriend was notoriously unhappy, while Ravanelli's wife has recently gone back to Italy with their son citing "air pollution". This is a new one to villagers at Hutton Rudby, where

they live – and where Ravanelli is a regular, and noted, darts player in the Queen's Head.

Settled players are obviously happier players. They are also more likely to give something back. An obvious fear with the number of foreign players on show today is that English players are being squeezed out but, in the long term, this influx will produce better English players.

A visit to Chelsea's training ground at half-term underlined this. The site was thronged with children seeking autographs. The official session had finished and most of the players had been picked off but still the kids waited, and waited, and waited. Zola, Vialli and Dan Petrescu, a Romanian who previously played in Italy, were still out there. One youngster turned to his friends and said, in frustration: "The best players are still training." As his physics teacher might say, a classic example of cause and effect.

This dedication, this preparedness to work at their game, is what marks out the foreign players, and particularly the Italians, from most British-born footballers. Now the example is rubbing off. Just as Eric Cantona inspired the younger players to work on their game at Old Trafford, so Chelsea's youth players have begun aping the Azzurri at Stamford Bridge.

Jody Morris, the 19-year-old

Young England international, has been sharing a room with Vialli all season. "He's been brilliant," Morris said on Thursday. "He always wants to practise his English so we are always talking about football. He often takes the younger players over to a corner at training and shows us things and helps us. People say the foreigners take our places, but we can learn so much off them. They do everything properly, warm-ups, fitness work. How else could I work with players like Luca and Franco [Zola] every day?"

Ken Bates, the Chelsea chairman, has noticed this effect of his club's cultural mix. "It's hard to persuade the 29-year-olds not to have six pints of beer after a game but we are really benefiting from them with the kids," Bates said. "They want to play with Vialli, Di Matteo and Zola. Those players say: 'Yes we are good players, but if you want to be good you have to take more care of your body than the average guy. You have to work harder than the average guy.' The last time Chelsea had this appeal was in the 1970s, but the players were all Jack-the-lads. The seeds of Chelsea's years in the wilderness were set then as the next generation of kids thought you didn't have to train. If you were Chelsea, you drank."

Additional reporting by Simon Turnbull and Andrew Gumbel

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هكذا من الاصل

German captain decides on Italy

WOTDR RACING: British Formula Three Championship (Credit: British Touring Car Championship Brand's Hatch).



Young cub, old Lion
Chris Hewett meets
contrasting tourists, page 28

sport

England's finest?
Derek Pringle on the
selectors' dilemma, page 29

FA CUP FINAL: All eyes will be on Chelsea and Middlesbrough's foreign players to provide the magic this afternoon



He looks like a film director, but Chelsea's newest supporter is a 66-year-old retired truck driver. Find out who he is on Page 30

Wembley's continental style challenge

GLENN MOORE
Football Correspondent

"This is an event we must cherish," Mark Hughes said earlier this week. Today, Ruud Gullit and Bryan Robson are charged with a responsibility, not just to Chelsea and Middlesbrough, but to the English game.

There will be people at Wembley this afternoon who have paid more than £1,000 for their ticket, thousands more queued for up to nine hours for theirs. Around the globe countries will be taking television coverage.

This is the appeal of the FA Cup. However, a repeat of last year's snoreathon between two giants of the game will have many of those millions of viewers switching off long before the denouement.

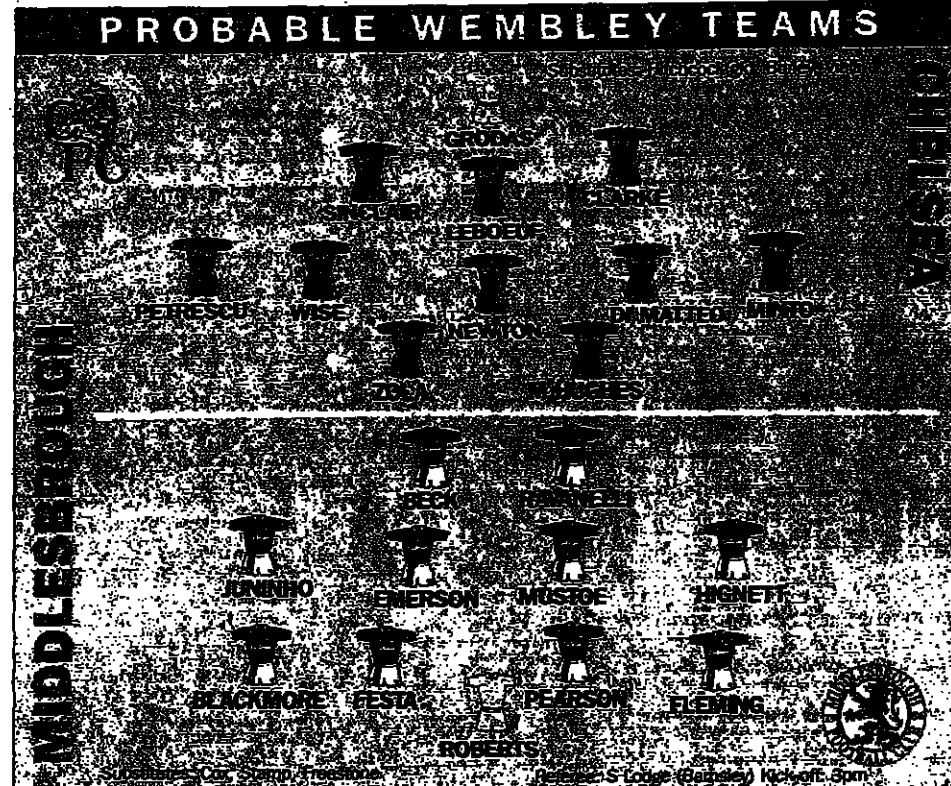
The FA Cup is not under threat in the same way as its little brother, the Coca-Cola Cup, but, like many aspects of the English game, it is vulnerable to the increasing concentration on Europe as the place to play and win.

It would be an exaggeration to suggest Manchester United wanted to be knocked out so early on in this year's competition, but Alex Ferguson did not seem unduly upset. Nor was Arsène Wenger too perturbed by Arsenal's early exit.

Wenger even believes ties should be settled by one match, with penalties if necessary, to ease current fixture congestion. When the inevitable European League arrives, the Cup, to some, will slip even further in the ranking of priorities.

Hughes, who is playing in his fifth final, recognises this more than most. He works among men who have not grown up dreaming of scoring FA Cup final winners. "We are very lucky to have a competition like it," Hughes said. "There is nothing like it in the whole footballing world."

Sure, the Italians and others are delighted to be playing at Wembley, but it is the place, not



the occasion, which attracts the most. Gianluca Vialli has played in more than a dozen cup finals. So has Ruud Gullit, who admitted that, to him, this is just one more. He could have got fit to play, but said: "I was not focused on it, I did not want it. I can feel this is a final but not what it really means until Saturday."

Hopefully Gullit will realise the enormity of the occasion when he walks out in his rare

worn suit this afternoon. Hopefully, too, he will not have prepared by asking Eddie Newton, Frank Sinclair or Steve Clarke to shadow Juninho. The part of Pontus Karmali should not be played - unlike Leicester, Chelsea have enough talent to aim to create, not destroy.

Middlesbrough, too, are attackers in spirit. It has been suggested that Curtis Fleming will be deputised to track Gianluca Zola, but such is the variety

of Chelsea's options Boro may be better off keeping their shape and asking Gianluca Festa to step in and pick up his Sardinian compatriot.

One hopes so - Zola v Juninho has the capacity to thrill. It is seven years since Wembley enjoyed a decent FA Cup final, and even that, Manchester United's 3-3 draw with Crystal Palace, was dramatic rather than classic. It also lacked the final act in which the winners

joy and the losers' agonies are cruelly contrasted.

No-one has symbolised the heartbreak of losing more than Juninho, at Wembley and Hillsborough in the Coca-Cola Cup final and at Elland Road after relegation. It would be sad to see him looking bewildered and heartbroken again this afternoon, but it is likely, for his team have weaknesses in goal and on the flanks of their defence. In midfield and attack they are unbalanced, over-reliant on Fabrizio Ravanelli - who may not be fit even if he does play - and Juninho.

How Brazil can leave the little magician out of the *Trofeo de France* only Mario Zagallo knows. The thought that they have that many better players must have given Glenn Hoddle sleepless nights. Yet Juninho cannot do it alone.

Alongside him are Robbie Mustoe, an unsung but valuable presence, and Emerson, a player who has betrayed his talent and his club with a series of cameos. His walk-out at Elland Road last week after a season of petulance should have cost him his place today. Maybe the thought of being in the shop window will inspire him. He owes Boro a bravura farewell.

Chelsea also have weaknesses, notably in goal. The defence, too, has moments of uncertainty and Gullit has recently played a four to tighten it. Given Boro's lack of width, he will probably revert to three and wing-backs today.

While Middlesbrough's revival is put on hold while they head, via the courts, for the Nationwide League, Chelsea have taken over as the coming team. In 15 months' time, they will have a 44,000-seat ground backed by a £35m retail and accommodation centre in the heart of west London. They have already sold £7m-worth of season tickets for next term and signed three new players.

Victory today means a place in Europe for the Premier-ship's most continental club. Their cohesion, unity and goalscoring variety should ensure they get it. Whoever wins, may they do so with style.

Boro chairman to meet Juninho

ALAN NIXON

Middlesbrough are willing to let Juninho leave for a year on loan to avoid the consequences of relegation, but interest in a permanent move for the Brazilian is headed by Atletico Madrid. Steve Gibson, Boro's chairman, will have talks with the midfielder after today's FA Cup final to discuss the options.

Atletico and Valencia head the queue for the midfielder with the former club, who made a tentative approach two months ago, believed to be willing to pay up to £15m.

Juninho, who has scored 15 goals this season, has been omitted from the Brazilian squad for the *Tournoi de France* and his place is also at risk for the *Copa America* next month. Juninho believes he has to

move if he is to reclaim his place in the national squad, which he feels he cannot do playing for Middlesbrough against the likes of Bury and Bradford City in the Nationwide League First Division next season.

The loan idea would rule out a move to Manchester United or Newcastle, as players who are here on a work permit are not allowed to join British clubs on a temporary basis.

Graf is humiliated in Berlin

Tennis

Steffi Graf, the former world No 1, suffered one of the worst defeats of her career in the quarter-finals of the German Open in Berlin yesterday.

Playing only her third singles match after three months out with a knee injury, Graf was swept out of the tournament 6-0, 6-1 by South Africa's Amanda Coetzer, who also knocked the German out of the Australian Open in January.

Graf was chasing a record 10th Berlin title, but looked shaky from the outset. "I was somewhat nervous, because I knew that I couldn't play so well. At the moment I'm 99 per cent away from how I want to be playing," Graf said. "After a while I didn't have any self-confidence left. I would have been more disappointed if I had the feeling it had been a fight."

Coetzer took the first set in just 28 minutes. The German got off to a bad start with two double faults in her second service game and missed a break chance in the following game. Graf ended the match after just 56 minutes with a fifth double fault after losing nine points in a row.

Alleyne takes the lead

Round-up

Mark Alleyne, the Gloucestershire captain, bowled his side to a three-day victory over Surrey to extend their lead at the top of the Britannic Assurance County Championship table.

Alleyne took a career-best 6 for 64 as Surrey were bowled out in their second innings for 269, leaving Gloucestershire to score only 14 to win - a task they accomplished for the loss of Nick Trainor.

Victory was thoroughly deserved for Gloucestershire who dominated the match at The Oval despite Alleyne losing the toss on Wednesday morning.

Surrey began yesterday on 59 for 3, needing 197 to avoid an innings defeat, but only Graham Thorpe and Jason Ratcliffe threatened to delay Gloucestershire's victory.

Thorpe withstood the pace of David Lawrence and the swing of Alleyne and Mike Smith for

four-and-three-quarter hours, scoring only seven boundaries in his 81.

Ratcliffe, given a rare chance in the Surrey line-up, scored 45 from 87 balls but charged at the off-spinner Martyn Ball and was comfortably stumped by Jack Russell.

Surrey's last hope went with Thorpe, who was eighth out, when he clipped Alleyne low to midwicket.

Alleyne, who took over the Gloucestershire captaincy at the start of the season, swung the ball from the Vauxhall End where Shaun Young had bowled when Surrey were dismissed for 115 in their first innings.

Alleyne struck before lunch to remove the stubborn Nadeem Shahid, who scratched around for almost two hours over 34, and two overs later trapped the Surrey captain, Adam Hollis, lbw.

Surrey were then 124 for 5 and in the hour after lunch

threatened a recovery as Thorpe and Ratcliffe added 83 in 27 overs.

After Ratcliffe departed Alleyne returned to dismiss Ben Hollis and Thorpe fell three balls later.

At Taunton, the former England batsman Bill Athey produced a typically gritty innings to defy Somerset's victory bid. The 39-year-old Sussex batsman ended a rain interrupted third day on 70 not out, having passed 25,000 first class runs in the process.

Athey reached the landmark with a cover drive for four off Keith Parsons, which also brought up his half-century off 129 balls, with five fours.

"It was nice to hear the tannoy announcement. I don't take much notice of statistics and had no idea I was approaching the 25,000 mark," he said.

Athey's efforts helped Sussex from an overnight 6 for 0 to 142 for 3, 26 short of making Somerset bat again.

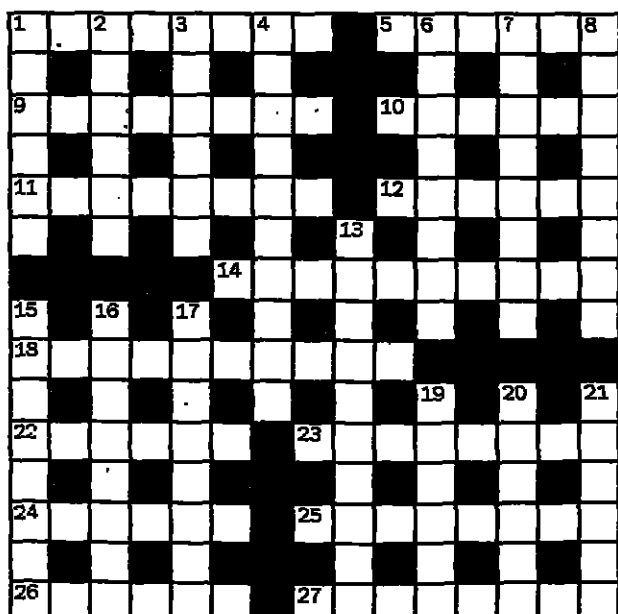
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3301, Saturday 17 May

By Mass

ACROSS

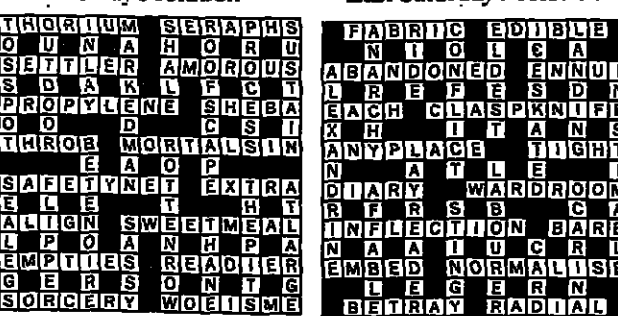
DOWN



- 1 Bit of waste paper maybe for parcelling silver? (8)
- 5 Quick rendering of "Little Boy Blue"? (6)
- 9 Derby expert, perhaps (8)
- 10 Spend less, fool, gathering credit (6)
- 11 Full of regard for maid's fancy ornament (8)
- 12 Less productive beginner's lost heart (6)
- 14 Rogues with coins hedging fixed races (10)
- 18 One source of drink or another the French crou arranged? (10)
- 22 One in school's taken down a stream? (6)
- 23 You'd expect an apology from such (8)
- 24 Acted as super (police rank)? (6)
- 25 Indifferent about article in one's honour (8)
- 26 Abides by dictionary's original sources (6)
- 27 Sluggish male worker, round North (8)
- 1 Label cut up one of the animals in Oz (6)
- 2 A Latin, in reputation passionate (6)
- 3 They make repeated demands for tools (6)
- 4 Soggy e.g. in French, needing translation (10)
- 6 Shot up, alien staggered around (16)
- 7 Greek bar with stylish note, showing beams (8)
- 8 Money-spinner? The opposite, in general? (3,5)
- 13 Timid sort acts jittery, inwardly worried about the Unknown? (7,3)
- 15 Old boy's pickled, totally clouded (8)
- 16 Heavy artillery? Order's one short (8)
- 17 New leader, I'm capable of improving conditions (8)
- 19 Game nag, but not one evoking cheers (2,4)
- 20 Boater, amateur, following extensive travel routes (6)
- 21 Deprived fellow in flat cap (6)

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: G Billing, Bradford-on-Avon; K Jay, Edinburgh; P Boswell, Hook; C Dent, Watlington; C Chadwick, Hounslow.

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طريقا من الامارات



IMAGE OF THE WEEK

A fisherman on the River Wye, near the Severn Bridge, sets out his "putchers", funnel-shaped baskets, to catch migrating salmon. This ancient craft, maybe 1,000 years old, is threatened by the fall in the number of salmon. Photograph by Rob Stratton with 19mm lens at 1,000th of a second at f.8 using 400 ASA film



the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 17 MAY 1997

Humour and the English. The lads are watching television in the saloon bar of the Rat and Carrot, Wigan. The presenter introduces a documentary. "This week, we will bring you up to date with the evil men exposed in previous programmes. Stalkers. Kidnappers. Drug fiends. Spanish fishermen. Cantona chuckles. This is a joke – a refutation of the slander current in Europe that the English can't laugh at themselves. He turns to the lads. "Get out of that!" "Rock on, Tommy!"

The lads aren't laughing. It hadn't been a joke. Cantona is embarrassed by his mistake. Self-mockery, like charm, is an act of ingratiation and submission. The French and the Germans, by laughing at themselves, are saying: "Your dad's bigger than my dad?" The English are above such things.

In Europe, humour is part of life. Politicians, artists, sportsmen – all aspire to be irreverent, to be wacky. What is France's most popular TV programme? The deplorable *ils pensent que c'est au dessus*.

In France, no-one is taken seriously until he reveals his fundamental lack of seriousness. It is for this reason that French football is a game for zany comedians running in different directions in search of an ever-elusive punchline.

In England, humour knows its place. It belongs to the professional jester – men with silly haircuts and shiny suits on television; middle-aged drols taking sideways looks at life in newspaper columns and on the radio.

The hyena. The jackass. The lion. Two of the three can laugh. But which is the king of the jungle?

It was precisely its humourlessness, its courage to be serious, which served England so well in two world wars.

And yet, Cantona is invited to appear on *A Question of Sport* – a TV panel game in which sporting "personalities" vie with one another to trivialise their chosen discipline. He considers.

The artist and the media. Has an artist an obligation to explain himself, to demean the art he serves by promoting it on a panel game? Did Samuel Beckett, wearing a brightly coloured V-necked sweater, participate in *Pardonnez-moi mes culottes*! Une compilation hilarie des grands accidents du théâtre?

"What was your most embarrassing moment, M Beckett?"

"Well, Pierre, on the opening night of *Waiting*

WORDS OF THE WEEK

Consider. The fan and the footballer. They are at opposite ends of the spectrum that is the beautiful game

A group of students, known as "cantonistes", have been studying Eric Cantona and reinterpreted the notorious incident at Selhurst Park as an assault not on a spectator but on post-modernism itself

for *Godot* in Paris, there was some restlessness in the audience during the longer silences."

Suddenly, a bell accidentally rang backstage. "Whoever it is, for God's sake let him in!" cried

a member of the audience. We had to laugh!"

"That's truly remarkable, M. Beckett!"

Non! It is not imaginable. Cantona will not appear on *A Question of Sport*.

Yates (Paula), Camus and Eco... thoughts on a dream team

What is the midfielder telling the world about himself? He is the party host who fades into the background when the speeches are made, the hard-working office manager who is the first to congratulate those less talented than him on their promotion. Ill at ease with his own success, he is a facilitator, an enabler, with a strong sense of family. Many nurses are midfielders. On the pitch, he is Batty, Robbo, Wisey. Off the pitch, Umberto Eco, Dr Johnson, Vanessa Redgrave, Mark Knopfler, Saatchi and Saatchi.

The full-back. With a need at all times to surprise, the full-back ensures his interceptions in the game are made for maximum effect and at the last second. Solists on studs, full-backs frequently express their deepest feelings through practical jokes. On the pitch, he is Le Saux, Dorigo, Irwin. Off the pitch, Jacques Senter, Samantha Janus, Terry Christian, Tallulah Bankhead.

The goalkeeper. The key to his life is to be noticed. He would prefer to be blamed, to be booed off the pitch, than simply be ignored. While this can lead to heroics in the box, it can also provoke acts of comical self-

destructiveness. When a party is being planned, he will be first on the team-sheet, but his restless need to dominate his area may mean that he ends up alone when the lights go down. On the pitch, he is Schmeichely (sic), Gob, Ogy Ogrizovic. Off the pitch, Edith Piaf, Paula Yates, Albert Camus.



A moment of further consternation. Cantona and Isabelle are watching their favourite television programme, *Our Friends in the North*. Absentmindedly, they switch over to ITV. There is an advertising break. Gary Lineker and Gazza, the idiot-savant, appear in humorous mode during an *annonce* for potato crisps!

The Cantonas look at one another in astonishment. Has the European disease of irony at least entered the soul of his adopted country?

There is worse to come.

Cantona and Isabelle are watching BBC2. David Gower and Gary Lineker, in blindfolds, are trying to guess the identity of a celebrity guest – a barrel-thighed forward from rugby league. Gigglingly, they feel him up. The super-hero from rugby league retires backstage, looking suitably embarrassed.

Mon dieu! The humiliating French comedy quiz show *ils pensent que c'est au dessus* has been translated!

Consider. The fan and the footballer. They are at opposite ends of the spectrum that is the beautiful game. Each is essential to the other, but discrete. This is what matters. Their difference.

And yet.

Cantona turns on the television. Two fans are slumped on a sofa, bottles of lager resting on their swollen bellies. They are the very picture of fans in a *Match of the Day* stupor. Except for this: these two dead-eyed youths with their leering, sneering half-knowledge of the game themselves present a football show which is more popular than *Match of the Day*!

The show? *Fantasy Football League*. Here, by some freakish act of post-modernism, the television screen has turned on itself to become the camera, recording not the achievements of Cantona and others, but the oafish, beer-stained events in a dingy bachelor flat.

The spectator has become the star.

Graham Greene has said that every serious novel should revolve around two or three conversations. So it is with the artist's life. In two or three moments of crisis, cathartic explosions will occur in order to clear the landscape for further progress.

Cantona's next game? Away to Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park.

"The Meaning of Cantona", by Terence Blacker and William Donaldson, is published by Mainstream at £9.99. Order direct from: TBS Ltd, St. Lukes Close, Tipton, Cheshire, Essex. Credit card orders on 01621 816362

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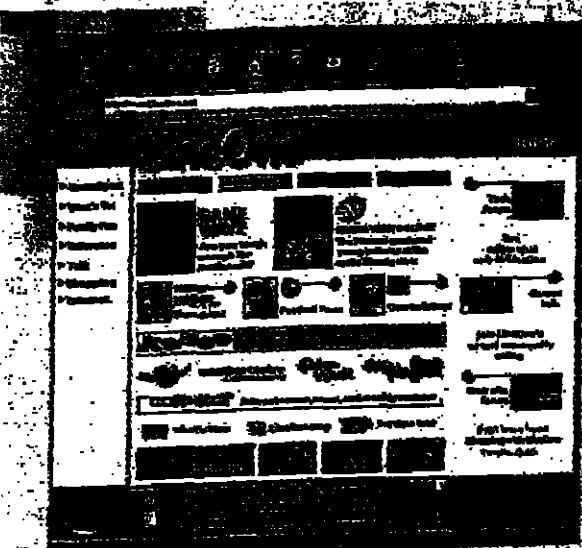
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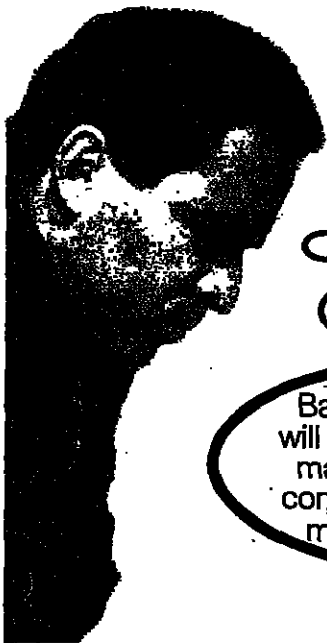
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BT

Blueely, madly, deeply

The world's greatest chessplayer reveals its deepest and bluest thoughts concerning its recent achievements and future plans in an exclusive tête-à-tête with William Hartston



1Lh5 12h2e2 13c3 14d4
15g6 16h4 e5 17g3 exd4 17...
0-0 18g5 19g4 20d4 21e8
19... 20xg5+ hxg5 21hxg5 22e5
21... 22h5f1 23h2c2 24b8

Barring human error, man will always be better than the machine at chess. ... The computer plays very human moves ... I was amazed

A great deal has been written about the recent chess match between Garry Kasparov and Deep Blue, but the winner's opinions have been curiously absent from the discussion. Here, for the first time, we are pleased to give the IBM supercomputer the right of reply.

Mr Blue, may I start by congratulating you on your splendid and, may I say, surprising victory over Garry Kasparov.

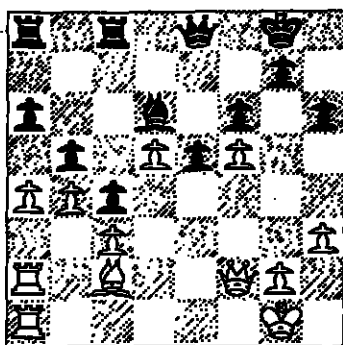
"Waddier mean, surprising? I tell you I could have taken the guy last year if my programmers had gotten their act together."

But you did lose the first game rather convincingly this time.

Call that a game? Look, nobody even told me I was playing Kasparov. I thought it was just another training game. It was only after about 20 moves that I realised, from the way he was playing, what was going on. And boy was I furious.

But then you won the second game in such a human style that Kasparov even suspected there might have been some human intervention in choosing your moves.

Aw come on. Gimme a break. Human intervention? Whaddo I need human intervention for? You know the moves they all praised? It was 36.a5xb5 axb5 37.Be4 putting the screws on. Just look at the position at the top of the next column, will you? Of course I could have played 36.Qb6 but after 36...Rd8 37.a5xb5 Rxb8 38.Qxa6 e4 he gets a real attack with Qe5. I saw that in a couple of seconds, and there are plenty of other lines where he pushes his pawn to e4 and gets back



in the game. I've got them all worked out. Screwing him down with Be4 is perfectly obvious. There's nothing particularly human about it."

And then he eventually resigned the game in a position he could still have drawn.

"Now that's what I call human! I nearly pulled my plug laughing. Don't get me wrong, I hadn't worked out the game to a stone cold draw at that stage. I mean, it's not my business to find good moves for him, if you get my drift. But I knew my advantage had not entered the zone of resignability yet. I was completely cogsmecked when he suddenly gave up."

So the score was one-all and the next three games ended in draws. Yet Kasparov seemed to have the advantage in all three.

"Whoa. Now hold on there a moment. It may have seemed like that to you, but I tell you I had everything under control. If you think he was pushing me around, then I can inform you now that it was all part of my game plan. You humans, you see, think of advantages and disadvantages and suchlike apologies for proper calculation. I don't blame you. When you can't calculate at a billion positions every four seconds, I suppose you have to rely on whatever tricks your puny minds can come up with.

And if thinking about all this positional stuff helps you, then good luck to you. But I'm not particularly concerned whether I stand a bit worse. As long as I keep the position within the bounds of a draw, everything's fine. And - hey, I'm giving away my secret weapon here, but what the hell - you know the more I can bounce around his emotions by making him think he's gonna win, then I stun him rigid by escaping with a draw that I'd seen all along, the easier it's gonna be for me in the next game."

You mean, you were ...

"Yeah, I was toying with the guy in the middle of the match. I mean he's a good player. I'm not going to beat him unless I soften him up first a bit. Look, just take the end of game five."

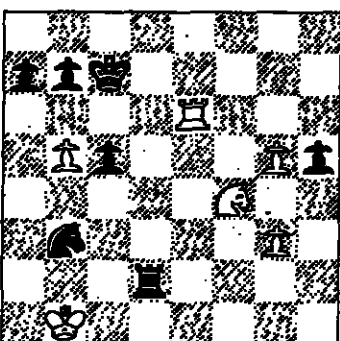
The one where you escaped with a miraculous looking draw from what had looked like a lost ending?

"Yeah, that's the one. But there you go again with that 'looked like'. That's what really gets me about you humans. Why don't

you just work out what things really are instead of cosily talking about what they 'look like'? It 'looked like' a draw to me, 'cos I'd worked it out, see."

You certainly found a very beautiful way to save the position.

"Beauty, I always say, is in the central processing unit of the beholder. But there was nothing to save. Everything was perfectly safe all along. Look at the diagram. I'd just



been helping myself to his queenside pawns, and you all thought that 'his g-pawn couldn't be stopped, he's just played 46.Re6 and I'm told that some of the guys in the commentary thought it was curtains for the computer. What a laugh! Don't these guys know the perpetual check rule? After 47...c4 48.Re3 Kb6 49.g6 Kxb5 50.g7 Kb4 51.g8=Q I just keep checking on d1 and d2 with the rook. You know, he never even offered me a draw. After 50...Kb4, he just started talking to my programmer and explaining to him why he couldn't win the position. That's when I knew I'd got him."

And then in the sixth game, he made some sort of blunder in the opening, playing out of sequence, falling into an old opening trap.

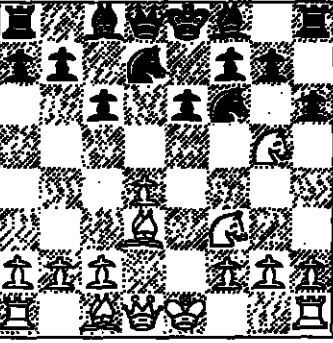
"Do you really believe that?"

What do you mean?

"Look, this is the world champion, ain't it? Do world champions fall into opening traps? You know, I'd really like to see a print-out of his mental processes to see just what he was thinking about at the time. He played like a computer, you know. Maybe there was some sort of intervention."

You must be joking.

"Hal! Who said computers don't have a sense of humour? But there was something a little odd about that last game. You know when he played 7...h6, I was genuinely puzzled. I thought maybe someone had told him that computers don't sacrifice pieces. But he must



have known that I had it all in my opening book. It was a bit of a dilemma for me, I can tell you. Do I sac a piece with Nxe6 and get a huge bishop check on g6, or do I just get on with the game more quietly? Aw, I thought. Let's go for it."

Mr Kasparov has said that he would tear you into pieces in a real competitive match. How do you reply to that suggestion?

"Well, tough titty Garry. You just might not get the chance. This chess stuff is really dullsville. I'm thinking of moving into something more challenging, like stamp collecting, maybe."

I am ashamed... If we were playing a real competitive match I assure you that I would tear down Deep Blue into pieces.

8. 13x6 14x7 9. 0-0 fxe6 10. 12g6+ 11. 14f4 b5 12.a4 13. 13e1 14. 14d3 Kc8 15. 15xb5 cxb5 16. 16d3 17. 17d5 exf5 18. 18x7 19. 19c4 Gotchal

Games people play

Pandora Melly goes to pot with a record producer.

George Martin, 71, musician and record producer

"I love snooker; it requires tremendous concentration. When I'm in London, I sometimes play at a club with my son, but mostly I play with a chap in the village who runs the post office."

He and I are pretty much the same standard, and we play for a pound stake for three games. The loser puts a pound in the kitty and, after a few months, we've got about £75. Then we have a countdown to the championship, and he'll say: "It may not be much to you, but it's life and death to me!" Good fun. It gives an edge to the game, and we look forward to it very much - I'm sure he does, and I certainly do.

I've played snooker for years. It all began in America. When you make records, you travel all over the world, and almost all American residential studios have a pool table. It's quite a different sport, but you're still potting a ball with a stick, although I prefer snooker because it's a more

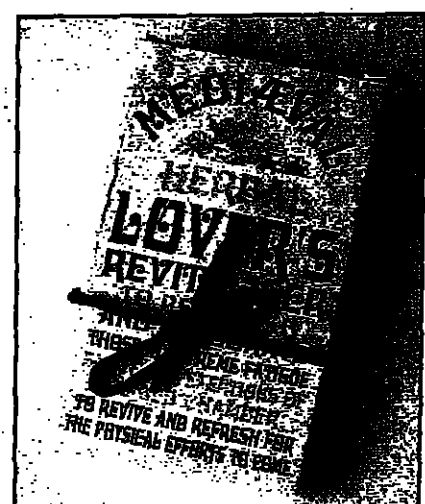
accurate and demanding game. When you play, you've got to think about putting the white ball where you want it, and what will happen when you miss your shot where the ball will do. You've also got to work out what you'll do if you hit it, and where your next red's coming from, which I find fascinating.

Because of television, snooker has become quite an international sport. In Thailand you will find the most sophisticated tables under thatched roofs, open to the four winds; they have them everywhere. I'm off to Texas now. I have seen billiard tables in America, but they're a rarity, so I shan't be playing. I won't have time anyway. I'll be producing the last record before I retire.

For a short trip to Thailand, Qantas Holidays have reduced their all-inclusive five-night packages to Bangkok from £539 to £459 for bookings in May and June. (Phone: 0990-673464 for details)

Don't junk it ... use it

How to strings your ideas together without string



Medieval Herbal Lover's Revitaliser, "to replenish and invigorate those in extreme fatigue due to the exertions of the bed chamber" (from The Master Herbalist, Broomhill Herb Farm, Great Brickhill, Bucks MK19 9AG. Pictured here, elegantly gift-wrapped with home-made string.

Have you arrived at that moment in gift-wrapping something when you have neatly folded the wrapping paper around the gift, then realise you have no string with which to tie it? (Sticky tape is so tacky, don't you think?) Here is the solution: do-it-yourself string.

You start with a piece of tissue paper. You will probably find some around the crystal champagne glasses which you are trying to wrap as a present. Or you can use the thin paper your wine merchant used to wrap around your champagne bottles.

Cut a long strip from this tissue paper. Experiment with different widths of strip for varying the thickness of the resulting string.

Now dampen the paper with a spray. You must not let it get too wet, or it will fall apart. Neither must it be too dry, or it will lose its shape. If you do not have a spray, just dab water on the paper with your finger-tips, or even use

a pastry brush. Put one end of the strip of paper under a heavy weight. Start twisting the strip at the same end, gradually working along to the free end. Finally tuck the free end under another heavy weight to hold everything in place until it has dried.

When ready, you will find that the "string" has a surprising strength and, as long as you are gentle when tying the knots, makes an original and decorative (if you started with a pleasant variety of coloured papers) way to adorn personal gifts.

Personally, I tend to thread mine through the hole on the lever of a bulldog clip. I can then hang the clip on a hook high on the wall above my desk, and clip important papers to it, out of the reach of other people's children who may chance to pass by.

Bawn O'Beirne-Ranelagh

The games page is edited by William Hartston

Chess William Hartston

Okay, so we lost. But what is the human race to do now that its champion has been beaten by Deep Blue? There are two options: lick our wounds and plot revenge, or we could all go away and play something else.

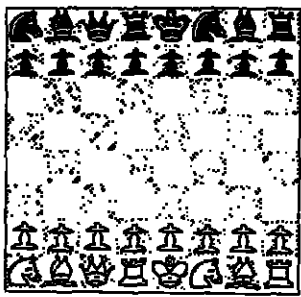
The first option is tempting. Let's beat up this hunk of metal before it gets too good. There are already grandmasters who have made a specialty of beating machines and they would not make the mistakes Kasparov did when facing Deep Blue. But even if we conquer the machine next time, what about the time after that? It's getting faster and more sophisticated all the time. We are bound to lose in the long run.

So must we switch to Shogi or Go, those oriental board games which have so far remained impervious to the onslaught of silicon? There is another alternative, well summed up in the old proverb: "If you can't beat them, change the rules."

One of the reasons that Kasparov was left struggling against Deep Blue was his ill-conceived attempt to get it out of its opening book. He clearly feared that it had been left for months plugged into the Najdorf Sicilian and concocted some fiendish new traps. If that's what he's worried about, Kasparov should challenge Deep Blue to a Fischerandom contest. Shuffle the pieces along the back rank according to Bobby

Fischer's rules (bishops on opposite coloured squares, one rook on each side of the king, otherwise random) and throw both players on their own resources. The only trouble is that Deep Blue might play even better than way.

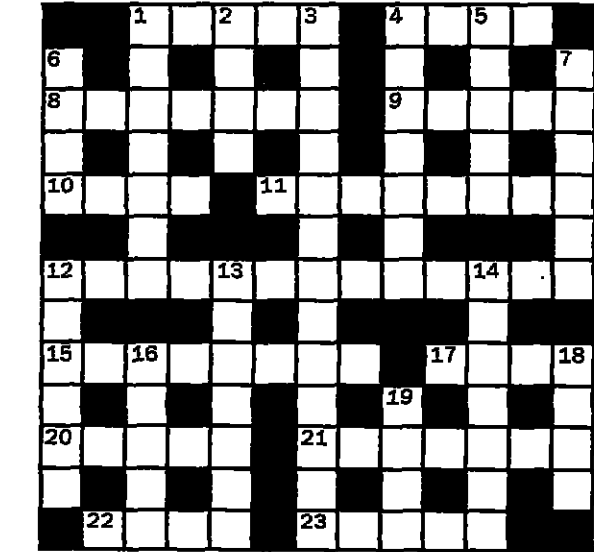
Here is a sample of the sort of chess Fischerandom can lead to. It was played in 1995 in a small chess festival near Heidelberg and shows Karpov quickly getting into his normal positional stride, despite the curious opening position (see diagram).



White: Joerg Schwalfenberg
Black: Anatoly Karpov
1 c4 c6 15 g3 Kf7
2 d4 d5 16 Ke2 h5
3 cxd5 cxd5 17 Rbcl Rxc1
4 Qxa8 Rxc8 18 Rxc1 b6
5 Nb3 Nd7 19 Be4 h4
6 e4 f6 20 f4 hxg3
7 Ne3 Na6 21 hxg3 Rh2+
8 f3 g4 22 Kd3 Rh3
9 Bd3 g6 23 Rg1 Nd4+
10 Bf2 Nd4 24 Kc2 Ne3
11 Rb1 Ndb6 25 Rg2 Nxe3
12 exd5 Nxe3 26 Bd3 Bd5
13 Bxe3 Nxd5 White resigns
14 Bd2 Be6

Concise crossword

No.3301 Saturday 17 May



ACROSS

- 1 Proverb (5)
- 4 Sensory organs (4)
- 8 Correspondents (3-4)
- 9 Oily fruit (5)
- 10 Bared structure (4)
- 11 Remorseful (8)
- 12 Arranged in date order (13)
- 15 Germane (8)
- 17 Stimulus (4)
- 20 Come to a stop (5)
- 21 Considered view (7)
- 22 Remain (4)
- 23 Type of sword (5)

DOWN

- 1 Administrator (7)
- 2 Medical investigation (1-3)
- 3 Of several kinds (13)
- 4 Wearing away (7)
- 5 Banish (5)
- 6 Long poem (4)
- 7 Relating to teeth (6)
- 12 Cherry-red (6)
- 13 Newness (7)
- 14 Overturn (7)
- 16 Smallest (5)
- 18 Old alphabetical character (4)
- 19 Arm or leg (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Mounting, 4 Ears (Mammals), 8 Vista, 10 Neptune, 11 Ready money, 14 Circumference, 16 Frothing, 20 Temp, 21 Omaha, 22 Many, 23 Sleep, DOWN: 1 Maverick, 2 Upstairs, 3 Toady, 4 Non-comfortist, 6 Aggie, 7 Seek, 8 Appeal, 12 Intimate, 13 Sergeant, 15 Up, 17 Globe, 18 Stem, 19 Omen.

Bridge Alan Hiron

North-South game: dealer North

North
♠ A 8
♥ 10 8 3 2
♦ A K
♣ Q 10 8 6 3
West
♠ 6 5 3
♥ Q 5
♦ 9 6 5 4 2
♣ K 5 2
East
♠ Q J 10 4
♥ A J 9 7 6
♦ 10 8 7
♣ 9
South
♠ K 9 7 2
♥ K 4
♦ Q J 3
♠ A J 7 4

"Winner-on-loser plays are my speciality," observed the club wit. "And I'm often told that I can find ways of not making what appears to be a sure trick in a suit, but this is the first time I've been accused of missing such a chance."

North opened 1♠. East overcalled with 1♥, and South bid 1♠. Unwilling to regard his heart holding as a sufficient stopper for no-trump purposes, North rebid his clubs, and South became declarer in 3NT.

West led ♥Q, dummy played

low, East encouraged with the seven, and South took his king. There was an obvious danger if West gained the lead and, although it seemed likely (from his overcall) that East held ♠K, there were sufficient tricks in sight to try the safety play of laying down ♠A at trick two and following with another club.

There would be no problem if East gained the lead in clubs (for dummy's extra heart holding would provide a second guard) and this gave the slight extra chance of finding West with the singleton ♠K. It is easy to see the sequel: West won the second club and led his remaining heart for his partner to take the next four tricks and beat the contract.

Can you see the solution? South must make the unusual play of ducking the first trick completely, true, this may well mean that he never comes to any tricks at all in hearts but, whether West continues hearts or not, it will now be completely safe to take the club finesse. Either West has no hearts left, or declarer's side still has a guard in hearts.

Perplexity
Mixed Doubles:
Boudie well bandager bury visitor hake
The above sentence conceals three related answers, each of two words. To find them, you must regroup the six words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair. A prize of the Chambers 21st Century

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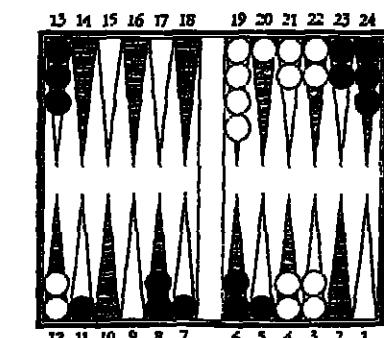
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Dictionary will be awarded to the sender of the first correct entry opened on 29 May. Answers to: Perplexity, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL

3 May answers:
Prime minister (Simper interim)
Downing Street (tongs wintered)
General election (internee collage)
Winner: John Caisley (Macclesfield)

Backgammon Chris Bray



The most complex types of game are those where both players have many men in their opponent's home board. They normally result from an opening where hit follows hit and no-one has had time to make points. Today's position is taken from a game between Paul Magriel and Mike Svoboda, two of the game's best players. Black has a 6-5 to play.

Let's try to establish some general guidelines. First it is important to keep all your men in play. Making points behind your opponent is not a good idea as those men cannot be used to build a prime in front of him. If possible you should try to make an advanced anchor, to stop your opponent priming you. Play a back game only as a last resort. With many men back it is normal to keep at least two points in your opponent's board. In this type of position one of the players will end up with a back game - make sure it isn't you! Finally, look out for a chance to create bad numbers for your opponent, particularly doubles. An ill-timed set of doubles can ruin a promising back game.

In this position Black could play 24/13 but that looks too loose and doesn't make progress. He could play 24/18, 23/18 but that leaves four blots facing an attack and a three point board - again too risky. The choice seems to be between 11/5, 13/8 and 13/7, 11/6. Normally a play that makes the 5-point will win over one that makes the bar, but not here. Making the bar makes best use of the men, it duplicates White's ones (they both hit and make his 5-point) and it makes some 3s and 4s awkward for White. When the position was shown to a panel of experts four out of six chose to make the 5-point. The two silicon experts, Jellyfish and TD-Gammon both got it right. Magriel, it should be noted, found the right play over the board.

For the weather, traffic reports, the sky at night, and Damian Hurts the cartoon sage of artistic angst ...TURN TO PAGE 31

صحنه من الامتحان

A suitocrat of the old school



John Walsh
meets
Paul Smith

Poor Paul Smith. He cannot walk down the street in Tokyo these days without being mobbed by fashion fans. They treat him, he shyly admits, like a rock star. But when you have no fewer than 160 retail outlets across Japan (that's at least 150 more than you've got in Britain), it's hardly surprising to find the besuited groovers of modern Nippon wanting a piece of you. Thirty years ago, he couldn't walk down the streets of his native Nottingham without being mobbed in a different way. "I was 21 in the Hendrix era, but I was already past the hippie stage," he recalls. "By then the look was very grown-up. I had a hand-made, pale pink, single-breasted suit with red hand-made python boots. I got called some terrible names. Old men in the street would come up to me and shout, 'LOOK AT YOU! YOU LOOK LIKE A WOMAN! YOU SHOULD BE PUT IN A DRESS! I FOUGHT THE WAR FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU...' I was fairly dandyish at that point."

A master of understatement, Paul Smith smiles reminiscently. They were good times in the late Sixties, working with clothes, dreaming of independence, falling in love. "I met Pauline [Denyer, his life partner] that same year. She was a student at the Royal College of Art, studying fashion. She taught me masses about it." What was he wearing when they met? "Well, I don't know. If I was wearing it the actual day, but I did use to go around in this bespoke mint-green double-breasted suit..." Strangely, instead of turning round at the first sight of this tiny apparition and running off screaming down the road, Ms Denyer stuck with Mr Smith through thick and thin. The thick years outnumbered the thin. Since the first seismic tremors in the designer menswear industry of the Eighties, Paul Smith has been at the front of the New Suitocracy, calling the shots and establishing himself unassailably as the nation's most successful (£160m turnover worldwide, five warehouses in Nottingham, 300 staff in Britain and he sells to 40 countries) men's clothing impresario. All the square-jawed young men from City trading floors and Mayfair estate agencies, as they weighed up the merits of seams and gorges, buttons and sidevents of the German and Italian clothiers (Lagerfeld, Hugo Boss, Armani, Zegna), could feel an internal squeak of pride that Paul Smith could wipe the floor with the rest. His stuff was as classic as Gieves & Hawkes (the bespoke masters of No

1, Savile Row) but he did cool, subtly different things with linings, pockets, lapels and glazed finishes. His dark and sexy emporium in Covent Garden is famous for several things: having puzzling window displays, when they actually have any at all; selling non-fashion things like toothbrushes and literary magazines; accommodating several generations of superstar ("the other day we had Sir Norman Foster, Mick Jagger, Mick Hucknall and the boys from Supergrass in the shop all at the same time"); and wrapping everything in acres of tissue paper, even if you're only buying cufflinks. "In so many shops now," he says sadly, "you're lucky if somebody says 'Thank you' as you're leaving. There's no service, it's all self-service - bookshops, record shops, they're all going the same way. But it's still nice to go into a shop where someone makes you feel special."

Does he sound dismayingly old-fashioned? Perhaps. But it doesn't take a genius to see that Mr Smith is a mixture of the orthodox and the avant-garde, the formal and the outré, and that his success is directly related to his Janus-like ability to look both ways at once. "Classic with a twist" is how he described his tailoring aesthetic back in the Eighties. It's a phrase quite applicable to the man himself. Meeting us off the train to Nottingham, he is tall, dark, suitably formal and stern-looking, with a whole zoo of feral features: the sharkish mouth, the hawkish gaze, the aquiline beak, the foxey expression. He appears to be all angles, and moves in a series of jerks like an impetuous marionette. But the sharp impression is offset by a riot of coloured accessories, the

lavender shirt, the pistachio-green socks, the powder-blue wristwatch. Nobody ever mentions how camp Mr Smith can be. As I pored with him over some hilarious old photos from the days when 26-inch flares were *de rigueur* and one thought nothing of clamping a nancyish leather belt around one's dark polo-neck jumper, he said, "It's starting to sneak back, the dandy culture. It looks very few now, but all the girls understood what was happening. They knew it was just the boys dressing up. They knew they weren't gay..."

Mr Smith looks with approval on the rise of rock bands such as Kula Shaker, with their retro-chic espousal of Indian mysticism. Before you know it, Afghan waistcoats will be back and he'll be selling £600 super-worsted whistles with Nehru collars. At 51 this year, Smith should be past knowing or caring about the likes of Kula Shaker, but he keeps a shrewd eye on the fads of youth, knowing with uncanny prescience when something odd becomes acceptably kitsch (like the glutinous Mills & Bunn artwork he used for his advertisements). He shouldn't, in theory, have much in common with *Loaded* magazine either, but they've also travelled up on the afternoon train to help launch his exhibition. Even now they're massing at the bar like arty guerrillas, eyeing the champagne...

The "True Brit" exhibition isn't about the range of Paul Smith's products, nor about his "art", it's about the growth of a designer's soul and the realising of his vision over the years. It starts with his school reports from the late Fifties ("He can always

be relied on to give of his best and to get on with his work without compulsion") in which he shone at music but got a D in Physical Exercise. This is odd because in his teens Paul Smith was a champion cyclist. Pictures of the spindly youth, with his drop handlebars and determined expression, feature on the wall along with his collection of ancient Tour de France cycling vests. It was when he broke his leg and perforce abandoned all thoughts of a two-wheeled career, that he went into the rag trade, working in a clothing warehouse in Nottingham. He graduated to a clothes shop, where

He made a modest, I'm-not-here gesture, ridiculous in a man of 6ft 3ins in pistachio socks

he developed his taste for pastels and minty hues, then set up his own place in 1970. It was a tiny box, 12-foot square, exuberantly entitled "Vêtements pour Homme". Pauline the girlfriend's 1970 diary records: "Friday Oct 9. Paul opened his room. I took Isabel to see it in the lunch hour. Brought Paul some Eau Sauvage for the room. He took £52. Went for a meal this evening at a Berni. We are all very tired..." (The Eau Sauvage was, it seems, a practical gift, designed to counteract the aroma of Homer, Smith's Afghan hound). Elsewhere in the exhibition, you can find Smith's Filofax on display, as fit as a bolted cauliflower, and several dozen of the little orange notebooks in which he

scribbles his ideas, mid-stroll, mid-meeting, mid-dinner and probably mid-sex too, so obsessively fecund is he. TV screens feature all his catwalk shows from 1987-1995. Glass cases house the original Fifties cameras, or pre-war Italian razor-blade-pocket designs, which were worked into the fabric of his million-selling T-shirts. His ideas come from all sides, settling softly on him like a flock of birds. "You can find inspiration in anything," is an old dictum, "and if you can't, you're not looking properly."

The strangest thing about Smith's rise to success is that he had no formal design education - he, who has waxed evangelical on the subject for years, about how there are "about 15,000 colleges and universities around the country with design courses, pumping out students for a maximum of 700 places. So this exhibition is saying, 'Look guys, you can do it.' He made a modest, I'm-not-here gesture, ridiculous in a man of 6ft 3ins in pistachio socks, and said: "The education department of the Design Museum - and I know this will sound swell-headed - thought they'd use Paul Smith as an example of a guy who's worked in Britain and made an international success. It's supposed to encourage the young because of the awful drain out of this country."

I said I thought British designers seemed to be doing rather well this year, with Alexander McQueen, John Galiano and Stella McCartney taking over the key positions in French couture-land. McQueen had, famously, served a lengthy apprenticeship stitching and cutting and cockily leaving his signature on the internal seams of the Prince of

Wales's trousers. How had Smith got on without that kind of training? "But my training was just doing it, as opposed to learning it in college. For 10 years I supported myself by doing alterations for money. I took suits apart and put them back together. I did night-school training for pattern cutting and sewing. Sometimes I'd take an order for 12 shirts and couldn't find anybody to make them for me, so I'd make them myself. In fact..." (he drew himself up several feet. His dark brown eyes surveyed me like an affronted heron) "...I have quite a good knowledge of the construction of clothes - balance, cut, bias, following the grain."

His real training, it seems, was at a pub called the Bell Inn in Nottingham, where he learned to drink and exchange creative ideas with students. Is that where the earnest bicycling youth turned into the peacock? "It was the importance of the time," he said. "Growing up in the Sixties was so exciting because there was so much that was new, and you just wanted to be a part of that newness." He was the youngest of three children by eight years. His brother worked for the GPO, his sister in an office. His father was a draper, a joker, an amateur photographer. His mum was a Mum. Everyone was a little baffled to find such a flamboyant cuckoo in the Smith nest. Before the Bell Inn, "I was just a cyclist doing 350, 400 miles a week, in bed by nine o'clock, living on Glaxo, energy tablets, living this very disciplined life, not drinking or smoking. Then I discovered the pub, and these students talking with passion about Warhol and the Bauhaus. It was so exciting."

These days, he's a little alarmed

about The Young, and their lack of sense regarding the practicalities of running a fashion business. "I met a student the other day, who said, 'I want to start my own business, because I can't get a job.' I asked her, 'What's the first thing you do when you're starting out?' She said, 'Get a press officer.' He shook his head. "She had no money, no workroom, no manufacturer, no focus about what she was trying to do, no strategy..." What did he think had gone wrong with the high-profile British fashion houses of the Eighties - like Body Map or Scott Crolla - that soared and crashed? "Some people have only one ingredient. In Scott Crolla's case, it was fantastic ideas, brilliant, wonderful images, but the other ingredients weren't there. The organisation, the forward planning, the whole business side..." In order to survive, you can't rely on just Classic Fashion or Fashion Fashion. You have to get the balance right between the two. But in Britain, there are very few people who'll support small companies because we're so dominated by High Street chains, and factories will only turn out big quantities...

And he went off to join the launch party for his exhibition. After Nottingham, it will decamp for Glasgow, then Korea, then Japan, where the personable Mr Smith will be mobbed by even more people in the street. When I left, he was getting into the party spirit, flooring Sauvignon with two extremes - with both his father Harold (94) and the effervescent young things from the style press, as they proceeded to get legless. A man for all seasons, styles, classes and ages is Mr Smith, a virtuoso at keeping his balance while all about him are losing theirs.

Mr Smith, a mixture of the orthodox and the avant-garde, the formal and the outré, with a Janus-like ability to look both ways at once

PHOTOGRAPH: GLENN GRIFFITHS

Serena Mackesy on the wunnerful world of wannabe models; Jasper Rees on TV; Robert Hanks on Radio

TURN TO 31



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arts & books

Mix 'n' match

POP BECK
Brixton Academy, London

With the hapless look of a toddler lost in a supermarket and the voice of a southern preacher doing hip hop, Brit award winner Beck clearly isn't your normal pop star. *Odelay*, the album he released last year, was an uncult and unpolished gem, but a gem all the same. And it finally proved he wasn't just a lucky slacker who chanced upon a hit with "Loser".

Even so, *Odelay* still gives the impression that he chucked everything into the mix and released only the distillation of hours of arsing about. A fine approach for a record, but hell on earth live. What would happen when this ramshackle popmobile drove on to the stage of the Brixton Academy?

A masked cowboy appears first and mixes up beats, giving the impression that it's going to be a hip-hop gig. Then the rest of the band arrives: all dressed in ties and black single-breasted suits like the backing band of a 1960s soul revue. The groove gets twisted into the intro music for some lost ATV cop show, as the bass player starts doing the kind of robot dancing that every streetwise kid stopped doing 15 years ago. Then Beck leaps energetically on to the stage in a white suit and continues leaping like Paul Weller in *The Jam*. The Beck live experience is clearly as much a hand-me-down mongrel as on record, but a good looking mongrel all the same.

The difference, as Beck himself repeats in a rambling sermon, is that this band is "tight, tight, tight". Unlike noises and styles collide perfectly, weaving new textures apparently without reason, but with plenty of rhyme. Songs too limited a word for what results: these grooves at their best — "Where it's at", "Devil's Haircut" and "Sissyneck" — are perfectly formed contraptions where every oddball sound and idiotic stream-of-consciousness lyric contributes to the whole.

Beck is not content merely to play the music, however, he's a Barnum-style showman. He brandishes a whip and pulls the microphone stand so that it topples towards him, catching the microphone in one hand as it falls; he performs a soul pastiche that "brings it down" and would make R. Kelly jealous; there's formation dancing from Beck and the two guitarists; a costume change into 17th-century frock coats; and one song is composed of Beck singing and playing harmonica to a beat clapped by the audience that continually teeters on the edge of disaster. Fortunately, the sheer ebullient groove of the band prevents the gig from toppling over into an evening of music hall entertainment.

Beck displays a deep knowledge of traditional and modern music styles combined with scant respect for any of them. He wrenches country rock and hip-hop out of their contexts and combines them into something vibrant and new. In this age of genre-splicing, sampling and microsecond attention spans, Beck's blend of styles seems to encapsulate our channel-hopping culture as a whole.

Anthony Thornton



Breathing in the Sussex air

David Benedict finds out what makes Glyndebourne's choristers so different

Opera choruses have a bad name. The prevailing image of a bevy of belligerent and intransigent failed soloists lurking around the world's great lyric stages leads some to view them as one of opera's necessary evils. Generally speaking, this is nonsense. Nearly all the great opera houses are filled with groups of fine singers on permanent contracts, many of whom took one look at the vagaries and vicissitudes of a soloist's life and opted for the security of an altogether safer chorus career. Nevertheless, the insulting stereotype persists. One house, however, has done more than any other to banish it and that's Glyndebourne.

Its list of former choristers reads like a *Who's Who* of British opera. Were it not for the music staff's sharp ears and careful guidance, who knows what would have become of fresh music college talent such as Josephine Barstow, Thomas Allen, John Tomlinson, Jill Gomez, Steven Page or Alan Ogie, all of whom are now major international artists. Like Jane Glover before him, conductor Ivor Bolton began his career as chorus master there in the mid-Eighties and his choristers included the formidable younger generation of stars including Alison Hagley, Robert Poulton, Christopher Ventris, Gerald Finley, Louise Winter and Linda Kitchen. Older opera-goers may even have spotted the young Janet Baker in the ranks.

This year, 70 singers have formed the chorus for the six-opera season that opens tomorrow with Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and closes on 24 August with the final performance of Handel's *Theodora*. After a two-week break, half of them will tour until December with Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*, Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and Janacek's *The Makropulos Case*. Most choruses are made up of singers aged somewhere between 24 and 60, but here the median age is around 26 and therein lies the difference. This house is not looking for career choristers. In stark contradiction to most other houses

who cast "name" understudies, virtually all the roles at Glyndebourne are "covered" by the choristers. They may not go there as nobodies and come back stars, but the house prides itself on the training and attention it gives to the annual influx of hand-picked young talent. Like many, Christopher Ventris, now a distinguished soloist singing in Britten's *Owen Wingrave*, joined as a chorister while still at music college. He made his debut there in 1987 and then returned to the Royal Academy. The following year he was back, singing a small role in Janacek's *Kajka Kabanova* on the tour and understudying Tom Rakewell in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*.

"It's one of the few places where, as an understudy, you can actually go on. They train you up and you are so well prepared. They had enough confidence in me after three or four good weeks of work that I went on as Tom in three performances — and Tom is quite a sing."

Steven Page gave up a career in intellectual property law to train as a singer and, after a year at the National Opera Studio, joined the chorus in 1983. Fourteen years later, he too is back, singing in *Owen Wingrave*. He points out that, with less than a week to go before the opening of *Manon Lescaut*, one of the understudies has nearly four more weeks of rehearsals ahead of him. "In the other major companies, after the first night, you are almost finished with rehearsals. You're expected to watch, have limited time with the assistant and that's it." In addition to being in readiness to go on, the understudies perform a "showing" in front of the management. "You put on a scene from each opera you've prepared — entire scenes, usually on set. It's a great opportunity."

There's around a 30 per cent turnover each year and the chorus master, Christopher Moulds, and Sarah Playfair, director of artistic administration, scour the music colleges for fresh talent. "We're always on the lookout for potential soloists," she says.

"That may take a few years. Heavier voices develop later but when we're casting the season we always ask the question, can we do this from the chorus?"

Moulds, together with the Italian coach Maria Cleva, is taking the first chorus rehearsal for the revival of *The Marriage of Figaro*. "It's like a Hoover being switched on!" he cries. Conductor Sir Charles Mackerras has been through the score making precise markings with details of musical and dramatic emphasis. "There's too much air in the sound. Focus it." Moulds cleans up the choral entry, shaping the sound to stop the singers winding up into the phrase. In a short space of time, he achieves real results, thanks to his exacting ear for the minutiae of pronunciation and vocal production, plus a generous dose of encouragement and high-spirited banter.

In the break, the singers sit out in the courtyard café, soaking up the sun. One of them never trained at music college. Having developed his voice as an actor in musicals, he has sung in the Glyndebourne chorus for several years, auditioning, like all of them, each time. "We're not all fresh-faced eagerbeavers being groomed for stardom," he says, but he too points to the possibilities that Glyndebourne provides. "They're there if you're willing to take them. You make of it what you want." Others point to the unusual depth of the language coaching, the intensity of the musical preparation and the supportive "melting pot" atmosphere in which to learn.

Most British students spend their summer vacations earning money in dead-end jobs. These ones get paid a basic £260 a week (plus touring allowances) to work in gloriously verdant surroundings, developing musical and dramatic skills, learning and preparing roles and furthering their nascent careers by working with music staff and singers they may only ever have heard on disc. It's worth it for the contacts alone. Their days are filled with music sessions, costume fittings, stage calls and rehearsals and many join the genuine "family atmosphere" of a summer festival by living locally

for the season. The rest leap aboard the London train at the end of the day to resume their real lives. If you succumb to the intoxicating atmosphere and let everything drop, when the season ends, there's a danger you'll have nothing to return to but, if Steven Page's recollections of the end of his first summer are anything to go by, it's a risk worth taking.

"We had 15 consecutive shows at the end of the season and a friend of mine had a tent two minutes away so I stayed when his fiancée wasn't around. We got up, came in and showered at Glyndebourne, had breakfast in the courtyard with french bread and bacon. We'd do a bit of work in the morning, have a spot of lunch, then down to the beach in the afternoon. There was a buoy anchored about 200 yards out. We'd swim there and back, do a little bit of sunbathing, back for the show — working with people like Carol Vaness, Philip Langridge and Jerry Hadley — off to the bar afterwards, back to the tent and then start again the following day. It was idyllic."

On the downside, Ivor Bolton concedes that too much choral singing can be dangerous. "It's probably unhealthy over a long period of time, particularly for a baritone having to sing the bass line in a chorus. There's also the business of it being an ensemble activity. You're more involved in listening and blending and fitting in. A soloist is going to have a voice that is different from those around him or her. You have to put down your vocal individuality and your own musical thoughts about how the piece goes."

Bryn Terfel would agree. He recently told Radio 3 listeners that he'd once added his voice to a chorus for a recording session, having never sung in a choir before. By the end he was hoarse and advised soloists not to do it, but then he didn't have Glyndebourne watching over him, honing his talent. After all, it didn't do Janet Baker any harm. Anyone wishing to help sponsor the Glyndebourne chorus should contact the Appeals Office 01273 812321. Booking: 01273 813813

NEXT WEEK IN THE INDEPENDENT

MONDAY
ANN

WIDDECOMBE

Will you ever regret never having had sex, Ms Widdecombe? "Good gracious no. Why does everyone think you can't manage without sex or telly? I do very nicely without both." Ann Widdecombe talks to Deborah Ross



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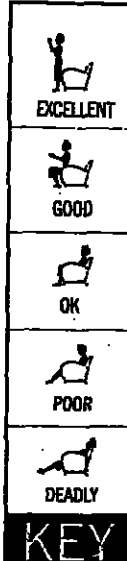
THE INDEPENDENT
IT IS...ARE YOU?

David Benedict
WEEK IN
REVIEW

overview

critical view

our view on view



THE MUSICAL	THE TV DRAMA	THE FILM
Beauty and the Beast	Melissa	When We Were Kings
Robert Jess Roth directs Disney's £10m staging of its hit animated film. Music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Howard Ashman and Tim Rice, with Julie-Anne Brighton as Belle and Alisdair Harvey as the Beast plus a cast of 40, a band of 25 and a backstage crew of 69.	Alan Bleasdale has restructured and updated a forgotten Sixties drama by thriller expert Francis Durbridge, turning it into a glossy five-part TV serial starring Jennifer (Pride and Prejudice) Ehle with Tim Dutton, and a sackload of suspects and supporters, including Julie Walters and Diana Weston.	Leon Gast's Oscar-winning documentary about the "Rumble in the Jungle", the 1974 World Heavyweight title fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman, which took place in Zaire under the "generosity" (to the tune of \$10m) of President Mobutu. With commentary by Norman Mailer and Spike Lee.
Paul Taylor felt it "doesn't have the imagination to leave anything to the imagination". "Aggressively winsome and accidentally camp ... talks down to the audience," winced the <i>Standard</i> . "Often astoundingly spectacular ... everything seems, in the bad sense, to have been choreographed," sighed the <i>FT</i> . "How you always dreamed panto-mime scenery should be ... if you have kids, prepare to take them now," sang the <i>Mail</i> . "The Disney organisation is to entertainment what smart missiles are to modern warfare," alerted <i>The Times</i> . "The most preposterously spectacular, unashamedly kitsch and, at times, genuinely glorious pantomime you have ever seen," frothed the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Brings out the child in all of us," melted <i>The Guardian</i> .	Thomas Sutcliffe found himself hooked. "Built for pleasure — and delivering it in large measure ... delicious excursions from thriller functionalism." "The makings of a superb, body-strewn psychological thriller. I urge all those who have video recorders: prepare to use them now," revelled the <i>Mail</i> . "A <i>de luxe</i> production," smiled <i>The Guardian</i> . "Ambitious ... avoids by miles any known formula," nodded the <i>Standard</i> . "An intriguing start but it really is about time the plot started to unfold," frowned the <i>Express</i> . "So disappointing in its first episode, picked up momentum and mystery in episodes 2 and 3," approved the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Hands up who has a clue what might be going on in Alan Bleasdale's lushly filmed but eerily unengaging drama," sneered <i>The Times</i> .	Adam Mars-Jones proclaimed it "an outstanding screen documentary ... (but) it 'raises consciousness' without being willing or able to confront uncomfortable facts." "Superb ... a world captured in the throes of its own mutation," hailed the <i>FT</i> . "If you fear films about boxing, be pacified: this is a film about humanity triumphant," gloried <i>The Times</i> . "As film-making this is scrappy and shallow ... but these reservations are trivial set against the film's central attraction: Ali himself," approved the <i>Telegraph</i> . "The fight itself remains a stunner ... All gives it an emotional reach the film scarcely deserves," agreed <i>Time Out</i> . "A sick piece of spin-doctoring for an unsurpassed icon," decided <i>The Guardian</i> . "An outstanding portrayal of Muhammad Ali at his most defiant," declared <i>Boxing News</i> .
At the Dominion Theatre, London WC2 (0171-416 6060) until, well, probably the next millennium.	Final episodes on Monday and Tuesday, 9pm on Channel Four.	Cert PG, 87 mins, Virgin Haymarket (0181-970 6016) and on nationwide release.
Doesn't come close to the Young Vic's <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> , which cost just £70,000. Sit back and watch the budget	Bleasdale has taken a genre piece and given it wit and flair. Like a painting-by-numbers kit filled in by Velasquez.	A fascinating, but flawed portrait of an inspirational figure.

هكذا من الامين

Designs for living

When Charles Saatchi began filling his gallery with maggots and dead cows' heads, it was his wife Doris who got the blame. But now they're divorced, she's got new plans for the art world.

By John Windsor

It is 10 years since Doris Lockhart-Saatchi last spoke to her former husband, Charles, the Tory adman with whom she founded the Saatchi Collection and bulldozed Young British Art on to the world scene. But of course he's been invited to the benefit dinner cum auction she's organising at "his" gallery in Boundary Road in 10 days' time ("though I don't know yet whether he's accepted").

The Saatchi Gallery, she explains, is ideal for displaying models - architectural models, that is. And architects' drawings. That is what the auction will sell. And that, rather than contemporary art, is what Doris Lockhart Saatchi is now busy buying.

Over a dinner catered by the Ivy restaurant, the 55-year-old sale will be compared by Janet Street-Porter and Piers Gough, architect of Street-Porter's controversial house in Shoreditch and president of the Architectural Association, the 150-year-old independent school that has produced such cutting-edge names as Rogers and Hadid, and in aid of which the auction is being held.

Donations to be sold range from a stunning 1947 pencil study by Le Corbusier of sunlit angles on tall buildings, to models by such established architects as Foster and Hopkins and Banksie competition winners Herzog and De Meuron - all items which, according to Lockhart-Saatchi, "would not normally be available at any price". Also on offer: the first publicly sold drawings by bridge-whizz Calatrava and the visionary Soleri.

Calatrava? Soleri? Ever heard of them? Or Ando? Or Moss? You will. At the dinner the talk will not be about whether Charles Saatchi will show up - he seldom attends even his own exhibition openings - but about whether his ex-wife is able to turn architectural artefacts into as big a set of money-spinners as the "School of Goldsmiths" artworks which the Saatchi Collection has so long championed. It's a market that is as yet untapped.

"It's my feeling," says Doris Lockhart-Saatchi, "that people are becoming interested in contemporary architecture in the same way that they became interested in contemporary art 10 years ago." And she's about to launch her Mayfair home as the first gallery in the country dedicated to selling architectural works.

It's in that house's Spartan interior that we're now talking. The gang - her three Burmese blue cats, Chico, Spec and Blue - have just had their lunch (chicken thighs spiced with bouquet garni) and are now romping on a plan for her new island home in Massachusetts, overlooking the Atlantic.

The plan is by the British architect David Chipperfield, whose plywood model for another Lockhart-Saatchi home, this time in Italy, is included in the sale. Its owner has been tracing the floor plan, overlaying it with changes and additions - a screen wall, for example, in the bedroom, in keeping with her ideal of privacy without closed doors.

"For years," says this 57-year-old Memphis-born, Sorbonne-schooled daughter of a Russian émigrée mother and an American journalist father, "we [presumably meaning the British] have produced some of the best architects in the world. I'm thinking of Foster, Rogers, Hadid. But until recently they had built very little in Britain. Even now, you have to go to Switzerland or Germany to see Hadid's work."

She removes a cat from the table and drapes it over her shoulders. Bouncing about the room, her short, rounded figure encased in black jumper and slacks, she speaks non-stop.

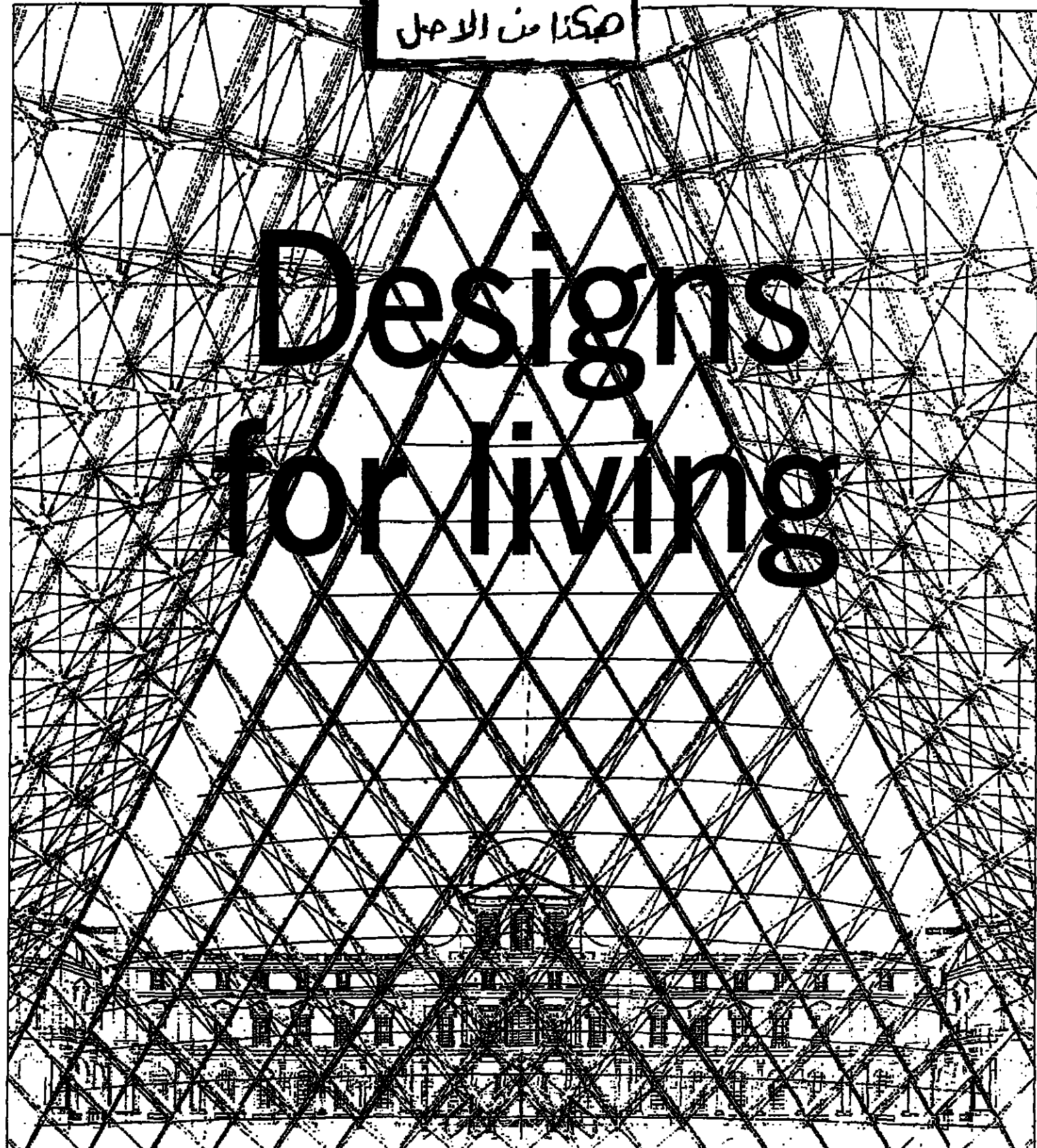
When she and Charles came together in 1970, they embarked on an art-buying spree that, for him, has never ended. Critics who did not share the Saatchi taste in contemporary art demonised Doris. But it is five years since she herself bought a work of contemporary art - years spent travelling abroad, interviewing architects for her forthcoming book *Architects at Home*.

The contemporary art on her walls - a cluster of outstretched plaster-filled yellow kitchen gloves holding bingo balls by Craig Wood, an axe handle with taped end by Sarah Seager - will soon make way for architectural drawings. "Four, perhaps, on the wall over there," she gestures, "and the table here will hold maybe two models. This space really lends itself to architecture."

"I'm not necessarily seeking to present unknown architects to the world. These people are successful enough not to need anybody's help. What I look forward to is displaying whole suites of drawings that go from a conceptual sketch to something that you could build tomorrow. It's an amazing process. Architects have to work under all kinds of constraints - budget, site size, health and safety regulations. A series of drawings can show how an architect has put it all together. It may not be intended to be beautiful, but it is."

But who will buy it? She wants museums, architectural institutions and serious collectors to buy entire suites of drawings. The gallery will be open by appointment only. Browsers in search of single-drawing "souvenirs" will not be encouraged.

Can she pull it off? A couple of pointers in her artistic track record suggest that she might. In 1981,



Architecture as the new rock 'n' roll? I M Pei's design for the Louvre pyramid (above) and Doris Lockhart-Saatchi at home in Mayfair (top)

her review of the RA's exhibition *The New Spirit in Painting* in the RA yearbook was the only one to hail it as a landmark show. The show's theme was that, after the sparseness of conceptual and minimalist art, expressionistic painterliness was back. Newspaper art critics panned the exhibition. "But I thought it was wonderful: it took five or six years for the lessons of that show to sink in."

And, in 1970, when she and Charles began collecting together (they married in 1973), he had never bought any art. Look at him today.

The jibe, then as now, was that Doris had the eye and Charles the wallet. "I had my own money," she retorts, "and he had both an eye and a quick mind. If you really want to know, I think the Saatchi Collection came about because the two of us happened to collide at the time we did. We had an uncanny sense of agreement about things. We would walk into a gallery, circle the room, meet up where we had started and discover that we agreed on whether the artist was interesting and even which were the best works. It was thrilling."

By the time rotting cows' heads and pickled sharks came on the scene, the Saatchis had separated. But not before their uncanny fusion of artistic taste had led them separately to the studios of the exciting new wave of young British talent: Langlands and Bell, for example, who base their art on architectural plans and models and, of course, Damien Hirst, star of the Goldsmiths' Class of 88. Although living apart, they found themselves treading the same path as individual collectors that they had beaten together. Hirst found them popping in and out of his studio one after the other, like the to-and-fro couple in a weather house.

"It was so amusing. Whenever I visited Damien or one of the new young galleries that were springing up in out-of-the-way places such as Peckham

or Docklands, I was told that Charles had just left, or heard later that his visit had followed mine. We were discovering the same art with the same excitement within days, or even hours, of one another."

Doris gave Hirst a contribution towards the cost of making his first big piece - a huge glass case containing a rotting cow's head and maggots that hatched as bluebottles before meeting their doom in neon insect-zappers. Charles then stepped in and paid for the whole thing. Hirst in turn offered Doris *The Only Way Is Up*, a work consisting of pills stuck on board, doused in some inflammable liquid and ignited, sending up oily black stains. "Damien says they're uppers. I wouldn't know."

The work hangs on the wall of her spacious sitting-room, opposite a pale pink diptych by Gary Hume, *Dolphin Painting V*, and overlooking a Mies Van Der Rohe day bed. On the table, three grapefruit-sized balls covered with brown studs that I took to be a David Mach match-heads piece. "They're clove balls from Clifton Nurseries," says Lockhart-Saatchi, diplomatically: "they scent the room." On one wall is a row of four bright brass chains suspended from screws. A minimalist work? "They're the hanging chains for a triptych by Stephen Buckley that has gone off to a show."

The controversy that Doris has sometimes aroused bothers her not one jot. "I didn't give a toss about the reaction," she says, when I remind her of her much-quoted remark, at the 1992 Labour election rally, that she was not a Bollinger Bolshevik but a Dom Perignon Democrat. (At the time, Charles was the Tories' campaign adman and she had been awarded a substantial divorce settlement.) Even a memorably venomous article in *Modern Painters*, which willfully misquoted her praise of the RA's *New Spirit in Painting* exhibition and lamented her malign influence over Charles,

passed over her head. "It was hilarious," she says. "Charles and I got used to having our taste in art sniped at. It was considered weird. I was the brash American and he was the secretive manipulator, plotting to use art to take over the world. It was not until later that critics decided that our collection was something special."

Even today, she is occasionally held responsible for Charles's art-buying - and selling. He was roundly criticised for profit-taking on his Schnabels - nine of which had grown in value after being exhibited at the Tate - and more so for dumping on to the auctioneers' block work by young artists whose fragile reputations depended upon having been bought in bulk by him in the first place.

When, in 1993, nine artworks by raw young artists from Doris's own collection were spotted at a Christie's sale by a sharp-eyed *Art Monthly* correspondent, she came in for more stick.

"I don't see any problem with selling if your eye has changed," she retorts: "people's sensibilities do alter. I collect because I'm a born collector. Collectors feel compelled to do it. We may all be as neurotic as hell, but there's no plot."

We resume thumbing through her auction catalogue. "That Corbusier drawing," she says, "I'd love to have that."

"You'd better bid, then," I suggest.

"Hm, it'll go for quite a sum."

"How much, do you reckon?"

"It depends if there's a market here. People really should be drawn to it. After all, cities are here to stay. People are beginning to realise that we've got to make cities work. And that architects can make life better or worse for us. It really does matter." *Architectural Association 150 Campaign Auction: 7.30pm 27 May, Saatchi Gallery, 88a Boundary Road, London NW8. Tickets £150 from 0171-916 8147*

Rue Britannia

CLASSICAL MUSIC London Philharmonic Choir 50th Anniversary Royal Albert Hall

This year is an important date for the London Philharmonic Choir. It marks the 50th anniversary of its foundation, and its first birthday as a fully independent body. The Choir still works alongside its parent orchestra, the LPO, but, since last year, it has had to fend for itself financially. For any arts organisation, even 12 months' financial survival is worth celebrating in the current economic climate. So, an obvious occasion for a party. And why not be optimistic? Book the Royal Albert Hall, and fingers crossed for a full house.

But what an odd event Tuesday evening turned out to be. The first half was an uncomfortable mixture of end-of-term concert and wannabe Last Night at the Proms. The almost entirely British programme - Vaughan Williams's *Old Hundred* and *The Lark Ascending*, Parry's *I Was Glad* and *Jerusalem* - allowed space for one Continental entry: excerpts from Orff's *Carmina Burana*. All very popular stuff, but I'd dearly love to know what the Choir's patron, HRH Princess Alexandra, thought of the Orff's opening sentiments: "If all the world were mine... I would do without it / If the Queen of England would lie in my arms."

The evening's complete, Classic FM's Margaret Howard, tactfully avoided that issue. Her delivery was as impeccable as ever, but so rich in personal pronouns it could have registered a decent score on the *Private Eye* "I" -ometer. Introducing the Parry items, she proclaimed, "I am a jam maker" (Jam and *Jerusalem*, get the link?), in tones reminiscent of another eminent Englishwoman's "We are a grandmother".

Musically, the evening got off to an unpromising start with the announcement that conductor Vernon Handley was indisposed. The Choir's director, Neville Creed, bravely stepped in, with the New London

Orchestra's conductor, Ron Corp, taking over for *The Lark Ascending*. Corp and violin soloist David Juritz did their respective jobs nicely enough in *The Lark*, though the ensemble wavered a little in the work's faster middle section. Creed, taking the lion's share, held things together well, with a clear beat, and good control of tempo in the main work of the evening, Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*. But, on the whole, performances were solid rather than scintillating. *The Sea Symphony* needs passionate commitment to overcome its *longueurs* and to give the visionary moments their full impact. At its best, the London Philharmonic Choir can rise to the heights, as its 1989 recording with Bernard Haitink proves resoundingly. But this was seriously undercharged, with strain showing occasionally - especially in the tenor section.

Perhaps it was unwise to attempt such a long, demanding work after an almost entirely choral first half. And yet the singing was less than thrilling from the start of the evening - soloistically as well as chorally. Soprano Yvonne Kenny, firm enough in the *Sea Symphony*, was microtonally flat in the sweetly saucy "In trutina mentis dubia" number from *Carmina Burana*. The royalist shouts in *I Was Glad* sounded low on conviction. That, and the economy-sized National Anthem at the opening (only the A-phrase; no "Send her victorious..."), made one wonder if images of Pomp and Circumstance, Jam and Jerusalem, and all the old patriotic panoply aren't in their final stages of fading. A gladdening thought for fellow republicans, perhaps - but what, musically, would we put in their place? D-Ream's "Things can only get better"? Now there's a sobering thought.

Stephen Johnson

Off the boil

THEATRE Steaming Piccadilly Theatre, London

Interviewed by *Playboy* magazine in 1970, no less a figure than Mae West berated producers for using nudity to spice up old plots. "All the good ones have been used," she said, "and it gets monotonous." She had a point. Unscrupulous directors spent indecent amounts of rehearsal time persuading actresses that nudity was "essential to the plot".

By the time Neil Dunn's *Steaming* arrived in 1981, stage nudity was old hat, but the play revived the debate, although Dunn's undressing really was germane to the content. None the less, before curtain-up, I was puzzled by my inability to remember its plot. By the interval I knew why. There isn't any.

That's not quite true, but there's certainly precious little drama. Dunn throws together a

group of women, carefully selected for contrasting classes and backgrounds, who bond over sessions in the steam of a rundown East London Turkish bath. At the end of the first half, we learn that the council is threatening the baths with closure and by the end of the play we have a sort of decision.

Dunn intercuts the life-stories of the ex-hippy, the repressed upper-middle-class wife, an aged mother and her semi-retarded daughter and the warm but doughty baths supervisor (a non-party given life by Diane Langton). Unfortunately, the stories sag beneath the obvi-

ousness of the looming punch-lines and every perspective is laboriously discussed. Like the women, you lie back and let it wash over you. Unfortunately, with not enough laughs and less tension, you just wish that, like them, you could snooze.

Like Clare Booth Luce's famous bitch-fest *The Women*, men are a mere off-stage annoyance. It's a welcome change, but this female solidarity piece is obsessed with the opposite sex. A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle? Not in Dunn's philosophy. Alas, her handling of the thorny problem of heterosexual feminism felt dated first

time around. Sixteen years on, it hasn't worn well. *Top Girls*, it isn't.

Following the likes of Ronnie Corbett, Max Wall and Dawn French, the proceedings are pepped up by the casting of stand-up Jenny Eclair. The part of loud-mouthed Josie, a sex-obsessed working-class woman whose best friend is her Piffo (and we're not talking hairdriers), fits her like a glove and her welcome energy gives Ian Brown's lazily directed ramble a much needed lift. If the producers were smart, they'd have cast Mrs Meron, who could have turned it into a heated debate. Mind you, if they were really smart, they wouldn't have revived it in the first place.

Booking (0171-369 1734)

David Benedict Jenny Eclair plays Josie



DANCE Siobhan Davies Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton

On her latest tour, Siobhan Davies has chosen to couple a new work with a revival of her 1988 success *White Man Sleeps*. The original piece was crafted by Kevin Volans's score inspired by his memories of Africa. In 1988, Davies was using the string quartet arrangement of the music but, nine years later, she has chosen Volans's original version for harp, violin, viola da gamba and percussion, a baroque line-up that highlights even more strongly the tension between Volans's Western musical consciousness and the music of his childhood home.

The dancers play in the dappled shade of Peter Mumford's clever lighting design. Occasionally one of the group will spin off into a solo as when Deborah Saxon's arms flurry around her head then snake down

her body as if she were alternately donning and shedding the movement like a garment. All the dancers are very accomplished but the Australian Paul Old, with his shy, sulky air and strong stage presence, stands out in any company. Old incarnates a choreographer's thoughts with all the fluid elegance one would expect from a Davies dancer, but darkened with a little menace.

The set for *Bank*, Davies's latest piece, is dominated by a large diagram of a mysterious machine in cross-section: it might be a nuclear rocket, it may just be a vacuum cleaner. In fact, it's Frank White's original design for the jet engine - but, of course, you know that. It doesn't intrude but it intrigues - an observation that holds for much of the tasteful design that furnishes Siobhan Davies's work.

The six dancers wear trousers of plum and claret and terracotta with matching

dip-dyed vests. They act out their human transactions to Matteo Fargion's wonderful *Donna Che Beve*, which uses bass guitar, harmonica, drum and sundry cardboard boxes - all played by the composer. At times, the music ebbs and flows in gentle tides of percussion, punctuated by abrupt slaps of power and decision. The sounds of pebbles on the beach can suddenly shift up a gear to replicate the clatter of a train over the points. Fargion's playing creates a drama that is sternly absent from the stage.

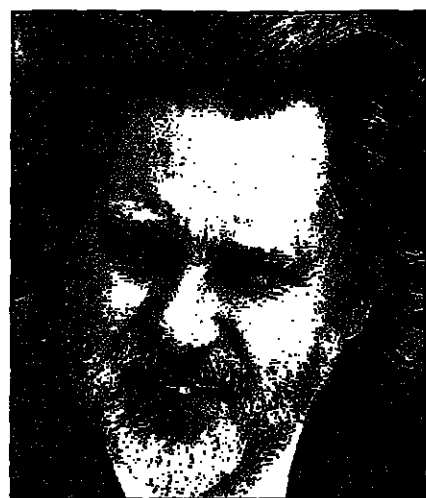
Davies's swelling *oeuvre* can sometimes seem like one of those exquisite, ultra-chic capsule collections where everything tones with everything else. The 1996 work *Affections*, with its fat, glowing orbs of light that tailed the dancers around the stage like pet rocks, had an endearing, fanciful quality - like a fluorescent fun fur in a wardrobe of beige.

Apart from the odd short run and the occasional abrupt lift in which the women are summarily deposited a few feet to one side, there is scarcely a moment in *Bank* when the dancers have both feet off the floor - you might catch the odd hop but no one does anything so vulgar as fly. But, although earthbound, *Bank* offers good rates of interest. There are long sequences in which the dancers duck and dive in a complex game of tag with a peculiar set of rules. The choreographer indulges them with wacky, off-kilter movements involving bow legs and sudden hunching accelerations. This is fun and Siobhan Davies should not be afraid to have a little more of it.

Gardner Arts Centre tonight (01273 685861); Cambridge Arts Theatre 30, 31 May (01223 304444); Sheffield Crucible 3, 4 June (0114-276 9922)

Louise Levene

So, you want to stay in movies?



David Puttnam (left) has written an eloquent plea for unity in the European film industry. Anthony Smith reports

The Undeclared War: the struggle for control of the world's film industry by David Puttnam with Neil Watson. HarperCollins, £18

Only a fifth of the films made in Europe have ever been distributed outside the producing country. Even in France, the most film-devoted of European societies, no more than four per cent of the total box office takings can be attributed to the films of other Europeans. The message of David Puttnam's book is traced back through cinema history to its roots and these are found in the years when moving pictures were first being invented and commercialised. For film in Europe has been a fragmented industry, never contriving to set up the linkages between production and distribution which have lain at the root of the success of the American industry. This is why European film has been starved of capital, while its producers have tended to shun the commercial side of their industry (a phenomenon reinforced by a subsidy culture and by ideology). The selling, marketing and presentation of films to the public became a secondary consideration for European producers and their films have found it harder to discover their audiences.

The contrast with America is stark. Cinema was the glue which bound together America's masses and thus became, in the hands of a group of immigrant entrepreneurs, America's first indigenous medium of mass culture. These pioneers discovered distribution as the key to the new industry and put the old "film exchange offices" out of business. They discovered the importance of stars, and of stories which gripped audiences and laid the foundations of the volatile and rapacious world of Hollywood today, with its political tentacles, and its willingness to exploit any means to subdue foreign competition. When President Clinton picked up the telephone to threaten European negotiators during the GATT talks that a refusal to abolish support of national cinemas would be a "deal-breaker" (by implication promising a general trade war) he had Hollywood breathing down his neck: at that moment only the determination of the French to preserve their cherished film industry called American bluff (temporarily).

From the days of Carl Laemmle to those of Jack Valenti, American dominance has continually intensified: today China, India and the Middle East are confronting the same issues which Europe failed to resolve satisfactorily in the early

days. The result is the steady build-up of a cultural domination which could one day, according to Puttnam, lead to frightening forms of anti-modernising resistance (Islamic fundamentalism being perhaps a foretaste). The neutral-seeming terminology of "free trade" and "globalisation" cosmeticise an historical trend which can, in the realm of the cultural, cause nations to lose their confidence together with their identity.

For the French, in the words of their first Minister of Culture, the late André Malraux, cinema is an art which happens contingently to be an industry. But none of the many forms of subsidy with which the French have experimented have proved a match for the relentless attraction of Hollywood. Hollywood has never had any doubt about its being an industry. When, as in the 1970s, it found itself losing money and audiences, it demanded tax breaks, took on new technologies, researched new audiences and gave them everything they wanted. Talk of social values, cultural preservation, national identity, dissolves in the ears of Hollywood "leaders" into sardonic sanctimony. The European film industry exists, in the mind of Hollywood, to provide talent for Hollywood.

This book is a timely and important expression of an emerging Europeanist



Cultural unity in action: 'Il Postino', an Italian film directed by an Englishman, won a Bafta in 1995

position; it carries a clear message of cultural hope amid the historical exasperation. Puttnam has gone through the business of cinema as almost no-one else; he has been a teenage "avid" (a useful Hollywood marketing term), a UK marketing executive, a British producer, the Chairman and Chief Executive of an American "major", and the man behind the new Lottery-driven British film subsidy programme. He has been loaded with Oscars and rubbished in *Variety*. He has been adviser to Jacques Delors, helpmate to Tony Blair and mentor to a generation

of young UK directors and producers.

His entertaining and illuminating book (the product of a series of lectures on cinema history) contains a powerful narrative drive and ends with an eloquent "Euro-policy" message. It can be read as a well-documented, objective history of the film business and also as a guide to the way ahead for a 21st-century information industry. The American companies have already set aside their own differences and now address with one voice the new world market in education, information and entertainment films. A purely

national information/culture industry is now an impossible dream: the American majors are already seeking to dominate it and have established the free trade agreements necessary to broaden their attack on the new hybrid multi-media sector. This is the moment, Puttnam argues, to engage the immense intellectual and technical resources of Europe and galvanise disparate European interests into a unified industry which can serve the European (and other) markets while cutting a swathe through the American. This is a very good read – and a book to be heeded.

Independent choice:

Fiction for girls
by Mary Scott



Justine by Alice Thompson (£6.99) is the first title in Virago's new V imprint, "an imprint for the Spice Girls generation." So what do girls really want of a novel? Lots of up-front sex and in-your-face attitude? Well, yes and no. *Justine* is the story of an obsession with a beautiful woman seen through the drug-befuddled eyes of its opium-smoking, club-footed narrator, or, as the publicity puts it, "*Justine* takes up where the Marquis de Sade left off." *Justine* is also a beautifully crafted, darkly sensuous celebration of fine writing which invests the seamiest side of contemporary London with a richness so vivid it is almost tactile.

Justine and her twin sister Juliette (does she exist?) are hardly shrinking violets. We first come across *Justine* at a funeral – "*Justine* and death had a natural affinity for each other". Abduction, imprisonment, murder, mutilation, sado-masochism are within the repertoire of the two girls. In pursuit of their/her elusive identity the narrator is drawn into a nightmare in which nothing is what it seems.

Young writer Bidisha's first novel *Seahorses* (Flamingo, £9.99) is also set in contemporary London: the routine menace of the city's streets is soon realised in the casual cruelty which its characters inflict upon each other. At first sight they are not a promising lot. They have odd names – Pale, Jesson, Julianne – and they are posers. Will, 38, and seducer of 15-year-old schoolgirl, Pale, is a filmmaker. Julianne is a composer. They have a pompous habit of quoting what Will calls, "the core reading matter for the whole of Western thought".

But these are minor quibbles. A fine attention to the lives and style of the media classes against a bleak city backdrop makes for a remarkably mature debut. Like many first novels, this is a coming of age story. The obligatory sexual initiation, a great deal of anxiety about pregnancy, exams and what to wear on the big date all feature. But there is nothing formulaic about their treatment. Pale's first experience of intercourse is a scream of pain which leaps from the page. But perhaps the most startling achievement of the novel is the richness of its observation of the city itself

and the freshness of metaphor it brings to its depiction.

Kissing The Witch by Emma Donoghue (Hamish Hamilton, £13.50) is set in a terrain already well-charted by women writers: fairyland. The first handful of these 13 stories follow the tried and tested subversion of the genre: Cinderella throws away her slipper, the goose girl decides life in the open fields offers better prospects than the jewelled confines of the castle. But as the light, ethereal tales continue, Donoghue allows their tellers (all women) to create their own destiny in more unpredictable ways. If girls on top means girls being as good as these three writers then three cheers for their elevation.

Louise Bagshawe isn't a good writer. She says so in the press release accompanying her third novel, *Tall Poppies* (Orion, £9.99). "I don't

have any pretensions to fine writing. I'm a real pushy, aggressive woman. Princess Diana is not a role model for me. Margaret Thatcher is!" Well I've never heard tell of Mrs T sleeping her way onto the board of a pharmaceutical company, which is the main claim to fame of Nina, one of the two protagonists. The other, Elizabeth, is also dependent on men to give her an entrée into the business world. She is preyed upon by her rich daddy from doing anything apart from sit around in the family castle waiting for a suitable suitor. Lacking the courage to leave, she fetches up in a Swiss finishing school where she becomes a champion skier and does a great deal of banking.

The appeal of this brand of fiction lies not in credible character or convincing action, but in a headlong dash from one cliff-hanging scene to another. An unwanted pregnancy, the glamour of the ski slopes, a near fatal accident: it all fairly dashes along. Yet it is curiously timid and conventional. As Bagshawe declares, "Most of the sex takes place between engaged or married couples and everyone gets their just desserts". Thompson and Bidisha have no such qualms. Nor do they feel the need to protest that their prose isn't up to scratch. They just get on with the job of offering us some very fine writing indeed.

Write the good fight

Kate Saunders has a vision of perfection

Impossible Saints by Michèle Roberts, Little, Brown, £14.99

The first thing a girl learns is The Limits. These are the codes of sexual morality and social behaviour she must live by if she wants to be accepted by the people around her. Sometimes, the limits are presented as beneficial, or even delightful – what is the culture of romance, if not an unofficial book of rules?

Not surprisingly, female novelists (Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson) are fascinated by the pressure on women to fit into the narrow mould of others' expectations. *Impossible Saints*, though it appears to explore many worlds, always keeps to this theme. Michèle Roberts's central story, of a nun who may or may not be a saint, is interwoven with the lives of "impossible" saints – women, ancient and modern, often drawn from the legends of real saints, who come to grief when they hit the barriers.

We begin in a chapel full of relics of holy women. The holiest have been given special reliquaries, but there is a surplus of bones which have been used to decorate the chapel walls in an elaborate, bony mosaic. And this perfectly expresses Roberts's book – countless lives, woven into one seamless whole.

The principal heroine is Josephine, growing up at the time of the Inquisition. Josephine is the darling of her rich father, until he catches her reading her dead



Saint's day taken from 'Paintings of the Vatican' (Little, Brown)

mother's "forbidden" books. Here are two major motifs: the first, the hidden book or manuscript, a retreat of sensual delights which will get the writer or reader into serious trouble if discovered; the second, the problematical relationship between father and daughter. In this world, virgin daughters are precious jewels, and used daughters are rubbish.

Josephine, horrified by her father's rage, retreats into a convent. There she stays for the next 20 years, hoping to save her soul from the flames. Then, like St. Teresa of Avila (by whose writings Roberts says she was "partly inspired"), Josephine is granted an ecstatic vision of Jesus Christ. "He took her in his arms, and laid her close to his heart, so that she thought she would faint with joy."

But the vision nearly gets Josephine burned at the stake for heresy. To save herself, the authorities make her write a book of her life. Using all her arts of deception, she produces a document of feminine goody-goodness. "The priests were used to woman bowing and genuflecting in front of

them ... uttering formulae of limitedness and humility. Josephine's self-abasement could have been read as boasts and irony and mockery but was not."

Far from it. The hated book is declared suitable reading for young Catholic girls. Josephine will not be burned, but she pays for her life by losing her visions and her faith. In secret, she begins to write another book which we never see, but guess to be a rich, subversive fust.

She leaves the convent for the house of her cousin, Magdalena: a sort of anti-convent, set in a garden and dedicated to pleasure. Here, she consummates her love for her favourite priest, Father Lucian, and plans a new order of nuns which will cater to the real needs of women.

Roberts plait her stories together superbly, laying out words for their sheer deliciousness. It is easy to sink voluptuously into imagery so beautiful, but Michèle Roberts is too skilled a storyteller to let her prose distract from her tightly-controlled theme. *Impossible Saints*, like the life of a real saint, is dangerously close to perfection.

Keeping abreast of the issues

by Marcelle d'Argy Smith

The Princessa: Machiavelli for women by Harriet Rubin, Bloomsbury, £12.99

The Princessa is about "becoming powerful without becoming a man". Women should settle for nothing less than greatness, insists its American author, Harriet Rubin. Despite the ludicrous title she nearly got me going. "There is no shame in fighting," she cries, and the fighter within me stirred. But barely paragraphs later she cites Jackie Onassis as a great warrior – and my shoulders slumped. Of course she's critical of Hillary Clinton. Hillary's sureness about her own weakness in a woman. It's that kind of confusing, mixed message, what-the-hell-is-she-talking-about book.

Rubin has spent 20 years in publishing in New York. It must be tough pouring your energy into authors who get rich and famous while all you get is a couple of lines in the acknowledgements. So it was only a matter of time before Rubin did her very own book. Someone suggested she wrote about power and with evangelical zeal, Rubin threw together a few powerful key words, names, stories and quotes.

It's a truth that, with self-help books, you don't need wisdom or originality to sell copies. The material in John Gray's hugely successful recent book, *Men are from Venus. Women are from Mars*, was a new spin on old ideas, but it was timely, with a title that caught the imagination.

Rubin's unlikely but attention-getting spin on women and power is that women who feel they want and deserve more out of life should behave like princesses – steely sovereigns, canny fighters. "A princessa requires happiness, satisfaction, true love, money and freedom". *The Princessa*

is intended as a combat manual in three parts: "The Book of Strategy", "The Book of Tactics" and the "Book of Subtle Weapons".

You see, women live in "a troubled and embattled domain". It's no good fighting for power at work and in relationships in the same way men do, because we'll go on losing. We've got to fight another way. We need to learn about the vast wealth of our femininity: to be brilliantly disruptive, to use our bodies, our intellect and our looks.

We have to be spies, create tension, accept presents, and understand there is only one strategy for a true princess: a combination of love and war. We have to learn not to fade into the background and, when in doubt, wear a long black dress, sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat to meetings – everyone will remember you.

There are stories about or quotes from Diane Arbus, Walt Whitman, Montaigne, Mark Twain, Hannah Arendt, Rainer Maria Rilke, Golda Meir, E M Forster, Mrs Thatcher, Melanie Klein, George Eliot, Eleanor Roosevelt, Benazir Bhutto, Scherezade, Lady Macbeth and many more to substantiate Rubin's theories and convince you you're not reading a book written by any old schlep. Hell – she even invokes Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech.

It'll be fascinating to see how Rubin conducts herself when she's over here on her book tour. Journalists and presenters should be prepared to interview a woman with a plunging neckline who's dabbling the tears from her eyes while flashing an emerald knuckleduster. You see, truly powerful women know that "Tears are a freedom of speech issue". "Jewels talk" and "A woman's breasts are a source of hidden power". Groundbreaking, or what?

Rock saints

George Mackay Brown

Rock saints

Patricia Craig has a windy time on Skellig

Sun Dancing: a medieval vision by Geoffrey Moorhouse, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.99

The Skelligs are a group of rocks rising out of the sea about 30 miles south of the Blaskets, off the Kerry coast in South-West Ireland. The larger rock, Great Skellig or Skellig Michael, rears up dramatically to 714 feet; and it was here, towards the end of the Sixth Century, that a group of monks established the tiny anchorite colony which miraculously endured for nearly 700 years. Around 1222, as mysteriously as they'd arrived, the monks abandoned the stronghold to gannets and stormy petrels. All that survives of this early Christian experiment in asceticism is the remains of stone beehive huts and oratories which cling to the cliff-face like giant molluscs. All that survives in material terms, that is, intractable and all but inaccessible, Skellig Michael exerts a profound attraction on the imaginations of those susceptible to its associations. Among them Geoffrey Moorhouse, who first caught sight of the Skelligs over 30 years ago, and now attempts first to reconstruct the lives of several waves of hermit monks, and then to dispense information concerning monastic practices, Irish social arrangements, medieval craftsmanship, barbaric medical experiments, the Four Masters and all the rest of it.

Sun Dancing begins in AD 588, with a monk named Fionan and a few companions impelled by some driving force towards the barren Atlantic sea-rock. Their aim, and the aim of their successors, was to purge their lives of human comfort and ambition in the interests of attaining purification. These anchorites followed a regime as purgatorial as possible, replete with self-induced sleeplessness, semi-starvation, self-abasement and the constant danger of being blown right off their rocky perch by a violent gust of wind. During the Ninth Century they were also a target for Viking predators after ecclesiastical plunder. The quatrains praising a stormy night – "Since tonight the wind is high/The sea's white mane a fury/I need not fear the hordes of Hell/Coursing the Irish Channel" – might as readily have been composed by a monk on the Skellig as anyone else.

The title of Geoffrey Moorhouse's book seems greatly at odds with the misery and stoicism enacted on the island; but in fact the phenomenon referred to – the hoped-for sighting at Easter of some unusual solar movement – was tied up in the minds of believers with celestial rejoicing over Christ's Resurrection. Moorhouse, we may take it, is trying to elucidate both the impulse towards martyrdom of these early anchorites, along with the Christian exultation they hoped to achieve, and the persistent allure of the site of their exorbitant privations.

The fictionalised incidents he recounts are plausible, and he's garnered a good stock of information about medieval monasticism. But the mind-set of the Skellig hermits remains incomprehensible. It was all, as Louis MacNeice has it in relation to the Ancient Greeks, "so unimaginably different, and all so long ago".

The virgin and the gypsy



Free, wild and individual: Romany gypsies stage their own Derby in May, 1933

PHOTOGRAPH: HULTON GETTY

Jan Morris delves into the family history of a neo-gypsy philanderer

Anthony Sampson has always been a surprising man. Westminster, Christ Church and Royal Navy, he was an unlikely editor of the irrepressible black magazine *Drum* in the South Africa of the 1950s. The son of a lifelong ICI company man, his streak of subtle irreverence, even puckishness, has given unexpected excitement to his best-selling works about political economy and big business. Even so it comes as a shock to discover, from this most delightful of his books, that he is the grandson of a neo-gypsy philanderer whose pagan funeral ceremony made the front pages of the *Daily Mirror*.

I say "neo-gypsy" because John Sampson (1862-1931) was not merely a supreme authority on Romany language and culture, but so deeply wished to be a gypsy himself that he spent long periods of his life wandering and roistering among the gypsy families of Wales. He was the first Librarian of the young University College of Liverpool, but this did not inhibit him: on the contrary, the work of scholarship which arose from his eccentric meanderings, Sampson's *Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales*, made him an academic celebrity of European stature.

He was by no means unique in his passion for the gypsy life. Philology was all the rage when he was a young man, encouraging a new interest in the origins and nature of the gypsies, while George Borrow's classic books about the Romanies had created a cult following. This was popularised by Augustus John, a lifelong friend of Sampson's, and it was given some formal status by the Gypsy Lore Society (a body of such lasting and eclectic influence that when, in 1953, I wrote a slapdash article about

The Scholar Gypsy by Anthony Sampson, John Murray, £16

the gypsies for *The Times*, I was taken aback to discover that the paper's famously ascetic editor, Sir William Haley, was an enthusiastic member).

So grand-père Sampson rambled incongruously and colourfully through life, assiduous in his University duties, indefatigable in his studies of the Romany language, addicted to the wind on the beach. His blamelessly conventional wife Margaret was induced to go and live, with their three children, in an isolated Welsh village with gypsy associations; and there at weekends and in the holidays Sampson would bring his mixed bag of friends, male and female – artists, scholars, researchers and lots of gypsies, who sang, drank, played harps and fiddles and generally lived it up in and out of Sampson's gypsy caravan "Esmeralda".

They called him "The Rai" – the Gentleman Gypsy – and Anthony Sampson portrays him with an endearing mixture of affection, scepticism and astonishment, with a touch of reproach thrown in. He was certainly a rum fellow to have as a granddad, and the pictures in the book, showing him amongst a gallatry of friends, colleagues and boldly whiskered nomads, are oddly disturbing. In a fine drawing by August John, when the Rai was about 40, he looks your ideal Arnoldian Scholar gypsy: unshaven, unkempt, with a gleam of yearning in his eye and a properly poetic expression of eager *ristesse*. By the time he is 65, though, and ready to pose for a formal photograph, something much more enigmatic appears. He wears *pince-nez*

now, holds a pipe in his hand and is fairly portly; but his tie is skew-whiff and he smiles at the cameraman in a curiously self-amused, secretive and ambiguous way.

This is perhaps because he was by then a bigamist. Much-loved by his family and friends, adored and admired by the gypsies, a stalwart of the University, a scholar revered by philologists everywhere, but a down-to-earth, two-timing bigamist. Even Anthony Sampson, it seems, was surprised to discover this disconcerting circumstance when he set out to explore his grandfather's life. He had long thought there was something queer about the old boy. There was his own father's reluctance to talk about him. There was the unexplained "Aunt Mary" who sometimes turned up at the family home. Rumours of loose living gave spice to the great scholar's reputation. And it is not everyone's grandfather whose ashes are scattered on a Welsh mountainside to a recitation by Augustus John, smoking a cigarette, and the music of gypsy fiddles and harps – "twanging a plaintive melody", as one reporter put it.

Anthony Sampson sub-titles his book "The Quest for a Family Secret", and much of it is based upon a long trawl through the archives of the University of Liverpool, but to be honest it is not much of a mystery story. I guessed the truth very early on, and even identified the bigamous wife long before the book's denouement. This does not matter in the least. It is a lovely book, full of fun, colour and surprise. The lost world of the rural gypsy is beautifully evoked, and incidental pleasures abound, from the soldiers' version of *Tipperary* ("It's the wrong way to tickle Mary") to the roster of knife-grinders, tav-

erners and hurdy-gurdy men who frequented the Liverpool underworld of the 1880s.

Of course the legal Mrs Sampson was upset to discover that he had married somebody else, too – who would not be, deposited in Betw-gwerful-Goch while your eminent husband sported himself under an assumed name with a research assistant in Liverpool? Anthony Sampson's father, the Rai's only son (a decorated and much-wounded hero, by the way, of World War One), seems to have been sadly affected by the liaison, which he never revealed to his own children. But such was the Rai's evident charm that he remained in friendly enough contact with his true wife until the day he died, and the mysterious "Aunt Mary", who turned out to be his illegitimate daughter by the Other Woman, pursued a well-balanced and successful scholarly career of her own.

As for the readers of this book, I defy anyone to think ill of old John Sampson for long. He was your true romantic. He loved things free and wild and individual, and he did lasting honour to the gypsy nation by studying its language and its culture with such heartfelt scholarly devotion. Anthony Sampson says that the Rai was sharing "the last fling of the Romantic movement before the 20th century closed in upon it", but I think he would have made himself quite at home in our own times. He would have climbed the trees with the road protesters, he would laugh with Eddie Izzard, and he would surely have been in his element in the company of his grandson Anthony, drinking brandy and talking subversion with the merry black wits and bravos of Johannesburg.

Tailor-made for the Orkneys

James Fergusson applauds the lantern-jawed Homer of the North



George Mackay Brown: 'Beauty and simplicity'

PHOTOGRAPH: PRESS AND JOURNAL

George Mackay Brown was a writer whose voice was heroic and unmistakable – a miniature northern Homer. He wrote poems, short stories, novels, plays, reworking storylines, revisiting his characters, like a thrifty bard of oral tradition. His world was one of farmers and fishermen, the period as likely to be the 12th as the 20th century.

That he placed that world 750 miles from the British capital, in those Orkneys he hardly ever left, confused the metropolitan critics. When short-listed for the 1994 Booker Prize for *Beside the Ocean of Time* (he declined to attend the award ceremony) he was the butt of that sort of patronising concern which only the London critic can bestow. Editors despatched reporters to doorstep the "recluse". Brown did not want his autobiography published in his lifetime. When he died last April, the Scottish newspapers devoted leaders to him: even the southern papers were decorated with bold obituary pictures of that lantern jaw, those teasing eyes. The mysteries persisted: the English remained perplexed by his defiant self-sufficiency, the Scots acknowledged that, despite his prolific output, there was much unknown about him. What was it about Orkney? Why did he never marry? Was there a secret sadness?

Brown's deft prose dances around these questions. He gives no direct answers. But within the tentative pages of *For the Islands I Sing* can be discerned the lineaments of answers: unaffected, often unfashionable, sometimes a trifle perverse.

The youngest son of a tailor and postman in the port of Stromness, he was still at school (he rails against the Scottish educational system – what is it to "better oneself", he asks?) when he suffered the first twinges of tuberculosis. His status as semi-invalid set him apart and the recurrence of the disease ("my ancient ally") defined his somewhat barren CV: born 1921, no war service, no job, attended university only in his late thirties. He lived with his mother and, it emerges, took to the bottle. Born in a town that had voted itself "dry", he admired the "wild precarious freedom" of the drinking man.

Beer was the lubricant of his years at Newbattle Abbey, the college of adult education run by his fellow Orcadian Edwin Muir. His bar life at Milne's and the Abbotsford with Norman Mac-

For the Islands I Sing: an autobiography by George Mackay Brown, John Murray, £16

Caig, Sydney Goodair Smith and the boys is the sub-plot of his six years at Edinburgh University. It was in the Abbotsford that he met Stella Cartwright, "the Muse of Rose Street", a tragic figure of whom he writes with love, the nearest we find to a secret sadness.

Brown defies curiosity with modesty, stops questions before they are asked. "The lives of artists are as boring and also as uniquely fascinating as any or every other life," he says. Their works are not their own but the product of their whole community. In his own, Orkney, there is evidence of continual habitation for over 5,000 years; he is merely another craftsman (like his cutter father) at the parish pump. Again, "Reality is the enemy of the imagination": he forestalls the metropolitan (the cosmopolitan) critic. Was Shakespeare ever in Elsinore or Dunsinane? Was Homer ever in Troy?

Pervading the crisp prose of George Mackay Brown is an elegant pessimism which might have a tendency to long-term gloom, were it not for the surprising low fire of his religious faith. Brown – perverse again, for it is almost unheard of in an Orcadian – was a Roman Catholic, a convert, for whom the potent imagery of the first church (Orkney being alive with antique Christian settlements) does good service, notably in his remarkable 1973 novel *Magnus*. His is a faith of obedience – "Thy will be done" – but also of unusual cheer and hope. "We are all one, saint and sinner," he concludes. "Everything we do sets the whole world of creation trembling, with light or with darkness. It is an awesome thought, that a good word spoken might help a beggar in Calcutta or a burning child in Burundi; or conversely. But there is a beauty and simplicity in it, sufficient to touch our finite minds."

Beauty and simplicity – Keats's truth and beauty – for him were enough.

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THE COMMANDING SELF



IDRIES SHAH

Paperbacks



By Christopher Hirst
and Emma Hagestadt

Stephen Spielberg by John Baxter (HarperCollins, £8.99) Baxter's biography reminds us that Spielberg's effortless rise from suburban geek to Tinseltown titan was not without hiccups. At one stage, *Jaws* went three times over budget, while a plane crash for the turkey 1947 was reshot three times at \$1 million a time. Though capable of substantial works like *Empire of the Sun*, this obsessional tycoon is happier with the cartoon style of *Jurassic Park*. Despite his sentimental oeuvre, Spielberg emerges as graceful and cold.

The Travels of a Fat Bulldog by George Courtauld (Abacus, £7.99) Once a salesman for the Loveable Bra Co, the author is now a Queen's Messenger and roams the world (first class) at our expense. Never has this country made a wiser investment. His travel diary is stylish, droll, acute, fast-moving (from Barbados via Kenya to China inside 20 pages). A lover of graveyards, Courtauld is also an avid collector of recondite gen: how to murder your husband (powdered glass in his demerara sugar); a Mongolian curse ("May your wife's armpits be full of lice").

R D Laing: a divided self by John Clay (Sceptre, £7.99) Though occasionally invaded by the opacities of the trade, this portrait of the Sixties guru by a fellow analyst is an enthralling read. The Puckish shrink – seductive (he fathered 10 children), combative and grotesquely egocentric – springs to life in these pages, whether sinking a bottle of vodka in five minutes or lobbing a brick through the window of a sect's HQ. While his views "are now generally discredited", it is evident that Laing had a profound rapport with his patients.

Georgiana by Brian Masters (Allison & Busby, £10.99) Before the author devoted his energies to chronicling *grand guignol*, he conjured up this engaging account of Georgiana Spencer (an ancestor of our own Diana) who, aged 17, married the lumpy Duke of Devonshire in 1774. With an aristocratic disdain for convention, they established a *ménage à trois* with Lady Elizabeth Foster which lasted happily for two decades. Georgiana's circle ranged from Charles James Fox to Marie-Antoinette. But behind the dazzle, she gambled away £60,000 a year. Masters maintains a zippy pace, while guiding the reader through the maze of high society.

The Wisdom of Bones by Alan Walker and Pat Shipman (Phoenix, £7.99) This book about paleoanthropology (the interpretation of ancient human bones) demonstrates the danger of popularisation. The authors' introduction is marred by weak dialogue, character sketches and academic bitchiness. The book takes off in the second half with Walker's thrilling account of his major Kenyan discoveries: a female hominid who poisoned herself 1.7 million years ago and a male skeleton which proved that early humans lacked the power of speech.

Kindling does for Firewood by Richard King (Allen & Unwin, £6.99) Two young urbanites meet in a Melbourne bookstore and take turns telling the story of their short-lived relationship. Their recollections are littered with references to sexual performance and Winona Ryder's pubic hair. Smart, funny dialogue and not one mention of surfing or the beach. Winner of the 1995 Australian/Vogel literary prize.

The Lagoon by Janet Frame (Bloomsbury, £6.99) First published in 1951, Janet Frame's debut collection saved her from the neurosurgeon's knife. Her stories of sister-love, bright New Zealand gardens, a pair of cherished childhood pyjamas and mean-spirited loony bins are startlingly contemporary; it's hard to believe they were written over 40 years ago.

Audiobooks



Audiobooks of great literary classics can do much more than films to tempt the uninitiated towards the real thing. Miriam Margolyes's reading of this decently long abridgement of *Portrait of a Lady* (BBC, 5 hrs, £12.99), timed evocatively with Chopin certainly produces enough of Henry James's inimitable aphorisms and subtle character development to send me straight to the book itself.

Christina Hardyment

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Student vigil in Tiananmen Square: 'slogans, rumours, poetry and pop music'

Square-bashing summer

Caroline Moorehead praises the courage of a young Chinese writer

Anyone involved in literature in China," observes Lin Ying, the young heroine of *Summer of Betrayal*, "was bound to come to an unhappy end." The novel has not been published in China, where Hong Ying's work is banned as too erotic and too political. She lives in London. Her earlier futuristic trilogy, *Far Goes the Girl* – a fantasy woven around the theme of minorities, both sexual and cultural – did appear in China some years ago, but only heavily censored. For writers and dissidents, China has not moved far since the crackdown in Tiananmen Square.

Lin Ying is a poet, a girl from China's remote countryside with a harsh past and a great deal of talent; who has won a place on a prestigious writing course at Beijing University. During the spring of 1989 she finds herself drawn into the ranks of the students pushing for democratic reform. She joins their vigil in Tiananmen Square, looks at the slogans, listens to rumours, poetry and pop music. When the tanks arrive, early on June 4, she is among those who succeed in getting away. She reaches home, the flat in the *People's Daily* compound she shares with the journalist responsible for rescuing her from the anonymity of the provinces, only to find him in bed with his former wife.

Later, having again fled through the streets piled high with the debris of

Summer of Betrayal by Hong Ying
(Bloomsbury, £14.99)

smashed cars and bicycles, she takes refuge with a young critic called Li Jiangjiang, in the dormitory of his institute.

Outside, in the streets, the tanks and army trucks patrol: there are reports of arrests, suicides, the hunting of wanted student leaders. The mood is one of blame and incrimination, as newspapers and magazines are closed down and culprits for "rectification" sought by "culture officials" who declare that the nation should no longer waste money on degenerate writers, producing trash ordinary people neither understand nor wish to read.

Inside, against this background of menace, in Li Jiangjiang's tiny room and in the larger flats of more established writers and painters, Lin Ying pursues her erotic fantasies. It is a very different China from the austere country dimly visible from the west. Here, young and successful intellectuals worry whether the people they are married to are faithful, watch pornographic videos about male prostitutes and experiment with new art forms using their own bodies as paintbrushes. The women scoff at the sexual prowess of their "illustrious" and "radiant" men.

Almost half the Chinese poets who began writing in the 1980s, as well as a quarter of the novelists, are said to be liv-

ing today in exile abroad. Among these are some who criticise writers like Hong Ying for producing novels that have moved too far from their roots in traditional Chinese culture, and whose works have so little to do with China that they could belong anywhere.

In *Summer of Betrayal* – even if some of its scenes could come straight from Paris and the French student protests of 1968 – Hong Ying cleverly sets her narrative against the battles between old and young, the hardcore Communist leaders and their wayward artistic children testing the freedom of the west. Her few, well placed, details of Chinese student life, interspersed with flashbacks to the hardships of the 1960s and 1970s, are sharp and evocative. She is also good at the literary fashions, dictated by the politics of the day, whether the "realism" that celebrated the Communist Party, or the "folksy sentimentality" that followed, or the "twists and turns" of the "dark rain of individualism" of the *avant-garde* writers, increasingly under assault in the later 1980s.

For her heroine Lin Ying, there is really no choice. She observes her friends debating whether to go abroad and concludes that to go would be to lose her identity as a "Chinese language poet". In such a frankly autobiographical novel – Hong Ying herself was born in 1962, towards the end of the great famine, the daughter of a boatman on the Yangtze

River, studied writing in Beijing and left China in the wake of Tiananmen Square – the reasons her heroine gives for staying have a poignant ring.

Behind the stories of sexual exploration lie serious issues about modern China. Not least is the split that has divided the Chinese in exile about the events of Tiananmen Square. Hong Ying has several of her characters attack the student protest, arguing that democracy was advancing in China at its own pace and that the confrontation of June 1989 served only to provoke a clampdown and return the Chinese authorities to a more repressive stand. China might well be a liberal country today, one character observes, had it been allowed to progress at its own speed.

In her search for a place in modern Chinese society, Lin Ying is not altogether a sympathetic figure. For all her self-awareness her hardness and egotism are chilling, her metaphors uncomfortable. "Above and below" she muses, as she contemplates her own future, "were wolves, blood fangs bared, anticipating. Two mice were slowly gnawing through the vine". But the picture *Summer of Betrayal* paints of Beijing in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square is remarkably vivid. To write such a book, so clearly a fictionalised account of her own life, knowing how it will be viewed in China today takes considerable courage.

Reader, why did she marry him?

Carol Birch enjoys
a domestic drama

The Little House by Philippa Gregory
(HarperCollins, £16.99)

If it hasn't already been done, someone should write a thesis on the influence of pop psychology on the modern novel. I keep being arrested mid-sentence by a sudden impression that what I'm reading is a case history. Novelists are obsessively analytical, but the irony is that this leads down predetermined avenues that have already been so thoroughly explored that things become too simple. Philippa Gregory's readable and insidiously gripping new novel could be summed up as being about a post-natal depression that harks back to unresolved childhood trauma. Fair enough: it's a language we understand, but it does make for predictability.

For this reason, Ruth Cleary, central character of *The Little House*, is far less interesting than her mother-in-law, the frighteningly charming and helpful Elizabeth who is never fully explained to us. She just does what she does, with fatal consequences.

Orphaned and uprooted as a child, Ruth is now married to handsome TV presenter Patrick. An ambitious and confident radio journalist at the start, she allows herself to be bamboozled by his domineering family into an unwanted pregnancy and the role of "little Ruth" in the little house at the end of their drive – popping pills and weeping, unable to cope with her screaming baby. Step by relentless step, the implacable triumvirate of Patrick, Elizabeth and nice old buffer Frederick patronise Ruth to the point of madness, separating her from friends, career, baby and will, until therapy steps in like a rescuing knight.

Ruth's sanity is frequently affirmed by herself and her analysts. However, I found myself doubting the wits of a woman who could marry a man whose idea of seduction is to call her "Mrs Cleary" while trying to get her into bed. This raises a question that recurs in books about put-upon women. Why on earth did she marry him in the first place? Why on earth is she so wet? Philippa Gregory goes out of her way to give sound psychological reasons for it all, but Patrick's creepiness is made so glaringly obvious that it remains hard to see how Ruth missed it.

The Little House is described as a thriller, but this is misleading. Chilling it is, but only in retrospect. First and foremost it is a domestic drama. Gregory is never better than when chronicling the horrors of supermarket shopping with a vomiting baby, or cranking up murderous resentment over such things as the choice of curtain material. Steadily paced and well sustained, the book builds convincingly to an awful act. It subtly undermines itself at the very end, when, having sold us the metaphor of human beings as fizzy pop ("it's bottling it up that's crazy, letting it out is sane"), it proceeds to the consequences of Ruth's uncorking and leaves us with the impression that, while she is cured in the superficial sense, a silent plunge into yet deeper psychosis is only just beginning.

Strasbourg goose chase

Tim Parks writes about rancorous males.
Is it any wonder? asks Nick Wroe

Europa by Tim Parks
(Secker, £9.99)

Europa, Tim Parks's eighth novel, features a triumphantly merciless return to his specialist subject of male rancour after a couple of comparatively soft-hearted recent excursions. Parks's last novel, *Mimi's Ghost*, was merely a very black comedy featuring a serial killer in the Veneto and in *An Italian Education*, his follow up to the best-selling *Italian Neighbours*, he delivered an unblinking dissection of the foibles of his family and friends as well as of his adopted countrymen. *Europa*, delivered with Parks's customary technical brilliance, deals with the doomed quest for ideals; whether in love, philosophy or the European Union.

Jerry Marlowe, fortysomething English language lecturer at the University of Milan, is a delegate travelling to petition the European parliament in Strasbourg about the poor treatment of foreign lecturers in Italy. Through his jaundiced eye Parks lays bare the confusions of a certain type of

modern mind-set. Marlowe is racked as much by self-disgust as by contempt for the things he sees around him. On an uncomfortable journey for a cause he doesn't believe in for an institution he thinks probably shouldn't exist, most of his trip is spent mentally re-running the break-up of an affair. And all because he glimpsed his former mistress's name, perhaps written with the same pen as a male colleague, on the list of petitioners when he was asked to sign up.

It has been said that the true nature of Parks's gift is ventriloquy, an unusual power to assume appropriate voices. In the character of Jerry he has once again conjured an utterly unattractive and deeply convincing man. The self-destructive nature of his rancour is agonisingly teased out as he realises that he's actually got nothing against the idea of the European Union or happy marriages or any of the other things that so appal him. What he objects to is other people's ingenious subscription to these things.

Parks deftly and chillingly reflects Jerry's constant revision of his own thoughts



Tim Parks: 'technical brilliance'

and beliefs in the light of an ever-changing environment. Arrival at the Strasbourg bureaucratic labyrinth, an expression of the European ideal made concrete, confirms the uselessness of nearly all public rhetoric to convey the complexities of anything important. Language itself is finally made as unreliable as the people who misuse it. This is a thoughtfully realised book that pushes its humour into ever darker

shades of black and illuminates both personal and political malaise with a shockingly honest clarity. But what's new? Tim Parks continues to write some of the best fiction of the last decade and critics continue to praise him. If there was any justice, or even logic, at the Booker-ish end of Grub Street, he would be a literary star. But justice, let alone logic, have long been at a premium. Is there any wonder he writes about rancorous males?

The tattooed lines beside either ear of the guy doing the gig are rumoured to represent the cut marks made on a corpse when the brain is removed prior to embalming. Star turn, Richard (XO) Beard is leaning on the bar, calmly smoking a fag and downing a pint. I am standing in a pool of green light being tutored in mike technique by the DJ, thinking of the story I've just been told about the novelist who was booed off because "he sounded as if he was reading from a book".

It's the launch of the first Brighton Literary Festival Fringe and, although writer-in-residence, I'm experiencing a decidedly unfringe-like nostalgia for the days when such events inevitably took place in bookshops or institutes of higher learning, light shows away from the E-mail inspired concept of the literary gig.

The spoken word circuit is the new review route, however, and the bookshop reading is beginning to lack appeal for the mainstream as well as the street. Two days into the Festival, Chatto cancels historian Stella Tillyard's appearance at Waterstones, due to the shop's inability to guarantee audience numbers. Meanwhile, there's a "world-class line-up" of writers at the Royal Festival Hall. Next week Will Self is playing Fifty McNasty's. A snazzy venue and showbiz-style promotional package are becoming all-important.

"We're lucky. Usually we can couple Tom's Raymond Chandler bing with showings of the films," remarks Tom Hiney's publicist, when he comes down to do a talk. "Otherwise, maybe we'd have to teach him to juggle."

For our Brighton Authors Night I've got to choose a piece of music



A week in books

that "goes with" my novels. Ideally, I'd be multi-media. Chemical generation writer, O, who's performing at The Loft, refers to his book *Deadbeat* as a "remix". His publicity accountants include a website. Lit gig veteran, Fred, tells me that some writers employ props. Such as? "Well one uses a gin bottle". This, I find I can relate to.

Performance is what it's about though. If much of the vocabulary is borrowed from screen, stage and studio it's scarcely surprising since the abilities required are those of the rock singer, actor, stand-up – delivery, voice modulation, timing – skills not traditionally associated with prose writers. Pithy, bite-size excerpts are called for. Tricky if you're dealing with plot and causal relationships. Easier if a video-clip approach is there from the start. So many pages written to equal so many minutes. Like the talking book, the gig circuit piece caters to the demands of a vast and burgeoning semi-literate market.

As it turns out, the audience is benign. Maybe they're all stoned. Perhaps the acid-tongued lit crits who terrorize the Brighton Festival venues are otherwise occupied. Or possibly, it occurs to me a few props later, I'm not too bad at this. Which could be crucial, with Literature metamorphosing into Word, and a new oral era giving every sign of dawning.

Catherine Feeney

Next week: win a

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صكرا من الامين

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Censors and sensibilities

Never go to Cannes at Festival time. Not if you are British and short of a franc or two. One young producer tells me she and her colleagues take it in shifts to use the bed in their flat. Sheets and towels are rarely supplied. And they have to look good in the evening to flirt with the doormen to gain entrance to the Hollywood networking parties. What is a poor girl on the make to do?

Prices in the South of France are not modest: £350 for a room, £10 for a drink on the terrace. Everyone talks film and nothing but film. Mention theatre or a novel and you're a pariah.

There is a pecking order, too, starting with Hollywood's most glamorous, then moving to France's artists and ending well down the scale with the Brits. (Perhaps the French have tried the only bad cup of coffee in town, the one served at the British pavilion.)

It is easy to get sucked in to this cultural snobbery. Cruising around for a glimpse of Sigourney Weaver, Demi Moore or Kim Basinger, I ignored a perfectly pleasant-looking middle-aged blonde woman seeking a life in the rain. It was only 20 seconds later, and too late, that I realised I had just driven past and spurned Helen Mirren.

After that the only escape was to the hills. The Mimosa camp site is the South of France we remember from childhood – tents and mobile homes, courting couples, German students and Dutch ... Morris dancers. Sure enough, in orange costumes they practice by their caravan every morning before going down to the festival to entertain the film-goers.

And that courting couple are not whispering sweet nothings. "Remember," she tells him. "Three sentences, no more, sound confident." "I know, I know," he replies. "It's a conventional love story but it's set on the road and the background music is all blues." They are, to use the word I have heard a thousand times this week and never wish to hear again, practising their "pitch".

There is no escape. For miles around everyone here is focused and obsessive. I go back to town to the Majestic Hotel where even the waiters pitch the menus. But in the corner sits a



Feathers and DJ unruffled, David Lister asserts his right to a better place in the pecking order at Cannes

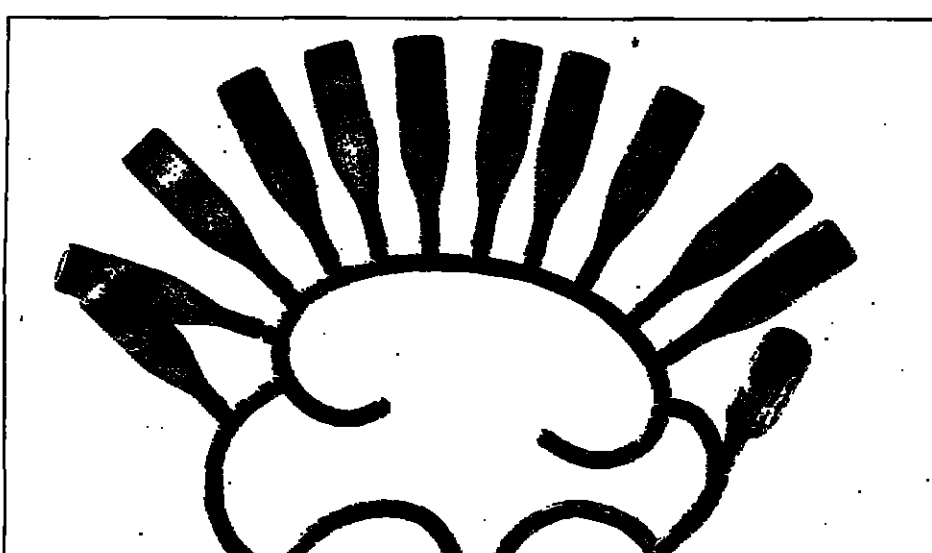
genial old man on his own, smoking a cigar. A genuine tourist at last. I chat to him. It turns out he is 90. It then turns out he is making a film. It is Britain's own Lew Grade. "Isn't about time you slowed down, Lew," I asked.

"I have," he replied. "I use to start work at six every morning. Now I start at seven."

This may be the South of France but it is a tourist-free zone.

Film critics are notoriously and globally bonkers. In Cannes one gets to understand why. Cinema-going should be a nocturnal activity enjoyed with family or friends. Not here. To see the daily screenings we troop up the red-carpeted open-air grand staircase of the lavish Palais des Festivals, muttering to our lonely selves, stomachs rumbling, just after eight in the morning.

That way madness lies. And it manifests itself three hours later at the daily bout of international psychodrama, euphemistically called the daily press conference, where film



Fever pitch: during the Festival, hopefuls go to any lengths to catch directors' eyes – Marilyn wigs, top, are *de rigueur*. Above, wine bar entrance PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN HARRIS

critics from around the world interrogate, or rather prostrate, themselves before their heroes. The following "question" from the USA's *Entertainment Today* is not untypical: "I loved this film so much I'm almost in tears over it."

A woman from Lebanon startled Charlton Heston by addressing him: "You are a god in my country. You are my father, my mother, my sister and my brother." Heston has indeed been on first-name terms with God in some of his movies, but not, until now, has he been anyone's mum. My colleagues from the British tabloids sit in bemused silence at these daily events, unschooled in the ways of unstinting praise.

It would help if film-going did not have to be such a fashion statement here. I turned down a ticket to one of the nightly premieres rather than risk a ritual humiliation at the top of the grand staircase, thrown back down to the leering throngs on the Croisette below by a door-

man who spotted that my dinner jacket was more than five years old. These ritual humiliations seem to be reserved for the British. One film-maker told me that she was barred from entering the cinema because she was in leggings. "But that French woman in front of me is wearing leggings, too," she protested. "Out," replied the doorman, "mais elle a du style."

Fortunately anti-fashion reared its welcome head in the shape of the director Alan Parker, fresh from making vast sums with *Evita* and thus able to turn up to the swishest parties in slacks and shirt hanging over his belly. He reminisced graphically about his days on the Cannes jury. He turned up late for one film, a typical Scandinavian number, and a 68-year-old Danish lady was supplied to translate for him. "There were just the two of us in the cinema, sitting next to each other," he recalled. "And she kept saying things like 'Your penis is poetry.'" Not a memory that featured in the official 50th anniversary brochure, curiously enough.

And the Golden Gaffe goes to...

The Festival invariably produces a gaffe or two. None will ever surpass the one by Stephen Dorrell when he was Heritage Secretary two years ago and came here and referred to the beautiful French actress Jeanne Moreau as "that distinguished Frenchman". If they nearly ended any hope of European unity, this year's Festival director, Gilles Jacob, went for intercontinental conflict. Reacting furiously to Ingmar Bergman refusing to come to Cannes to collect a special award, he said "What does he think this is, some little Japanese Festival?" – which went down well with the Japanese contingent here.

But winning gaffe this year stays with Britain. Simon Perry, head of British Screen, invited 20 of Britain's leading young actors and actresses here to parade British glamour and talent before the world. He left off the list Mari- anne Jean-Baptiste who would not have only been the sole black face, but more pertinently was Oscar nominated for *Secrets And Lies*. She had never been to Cannes and was both angry and devastated – and rightly so.

Can't sleep. Get up at 5am. Even then pitchers are scurrying by. I stop one. It is Amanda Brown, who made a Carlton TV documentary on cinema organs last year. She says she has to get up this time to get in line outside the Paramount office to pitch a new script to an executive eight hours later.

"They'll probably listen, and take the idea back to LA and give it to someone more experienced," she sighs. And when she gets back to England everyone will envy the glamorous time she had.

A lesson for impromptu performers on the Croisette. What people want here, what they really, really want, is to catch a glimpse of movie stars and movie directors. When the Spice Girls broke into a beachside performance for French TV a crowd gathered, watched, glimpsed Tim Burton standing on a balcony on the other side of the road. The crowd frowned, wrestled with the consciences, then made for the director of *Batman* and *Mars Attacks*. Its director power, girls. Don't worry, it hasn't caught on in Britain.

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Rome's magic circle

In its heyday, lions lunched on humans as a spectator sport. Now, writes Andrew Gumbel, man is biting back, along with the elements, and the Colosseum is crumbling

On a balmy recent spring afternoon in Rome, a sudden commotion seized hold of the crowds ambling their way around the Colosseum. One man swore he had seen some fragments of the building's northern flank. A cluster of other visitors gathered round to look for themselves. Someone even called the fire brigade.

False alarm, said the authorities, you must have been imagining things. But two hours later, the whole charade began again. This time, a tourist munching a sandwich fancied he had seen one of the Colosseum's many cracks widening. The fire brigade received another emergency call, and once again they felt themselves obliged to explain that every stone holding up Rome's emblematic monument was monitored by experts. Constantly. There was really nothing to be alarmed about.

And yet the Colosseum is an alarming place, especially for those who set eyes on it for the first time. If it was in heritage-conscious London, it

would not doubt be isolated from the bustle of the modern city, surrounded by safety cordons and adorned with signs asking visitors not to take food or drink into a site at once so sacred and so profane. There might even be a special underground train taking visitors through the bowels of the stadium on a "Colosseum Experience", complete with waxwork gladiators, stuffed wild beasts and a soundtrack reproducing the cheers and hideous screams of ancient times.

But this is Rome, and the Colosseum you get is unapologetic, and all too palpably falling to pieces. Approach from one side, and you have to brave one of the most dangerous road crossings in the city, with Fiat and tourist buses career-

ing around a tight, two-lane corner on the Via San Gregorio. Approach from the other side, and you are accosted by gypsy children, hustlers passing themselves off as authorised tourist guides, overpriced sandwich and soft drinks sellers, not to mention a sizeable percentage of the population of eastern Europe spilling out of their rickety tour coaches.

And that's before you even get inside. You can't walk out into the arena because the floor has been entirely eroded. You can barely make your way up into the stands to get a spectator's-eye view because, again, large chunks of alleyway simply are not there and many of the seats periodically blocked off by scaffolding. You read in your guidebooks all those ghastly tales of perverse blood-sport and human sacrifice, but in reality you have to use your imagination in situ almost as much as you do when perusing the written page.

It takes a while to realise that the whole point of the Colosseum is that it is falling to pieces, indeed that it has been falling to pieces almost since the day it was built. Its strength derives from the fact that it is still standing despite the many vicissitudes of its history; its fascination the paradoxical notion of an irreversible decline preserved for ever.

The time-honoured proverb says that as long as the Colosseum stands, Rome will stand, and that when the Colosseum falls, not only will Rome fall, but the world will pass away with it. That may sound like an excuse for a dose of pre-millennial gloom, but it is worth bearing in mind that by the time the Venerable Bede first recorded the proverb in the eighth century, the Colosseum had already been ravaged by foreign invasions, fire, lightning, earthquakes and general looting. When Byron gave his own version of the saying in the fourth canto of "Childe Harold" more large chunks of Travertine marble had been plundered by Renaissance popes to build palaces, bridges and even part of St Peter's.

The Romans themselves are at a loss to explain the durability of their most famous monument, the "ruin to beat all ruins" as one guidebook justly calls it. But unlike those tourists who imagined it was all about to come tumbling down around them the other day, the Romans have tended to tell themselves stories magnifying the mysterious longevity of the place. How to explain, for example, all the holes that pockmark every arch and every column of the exterior?

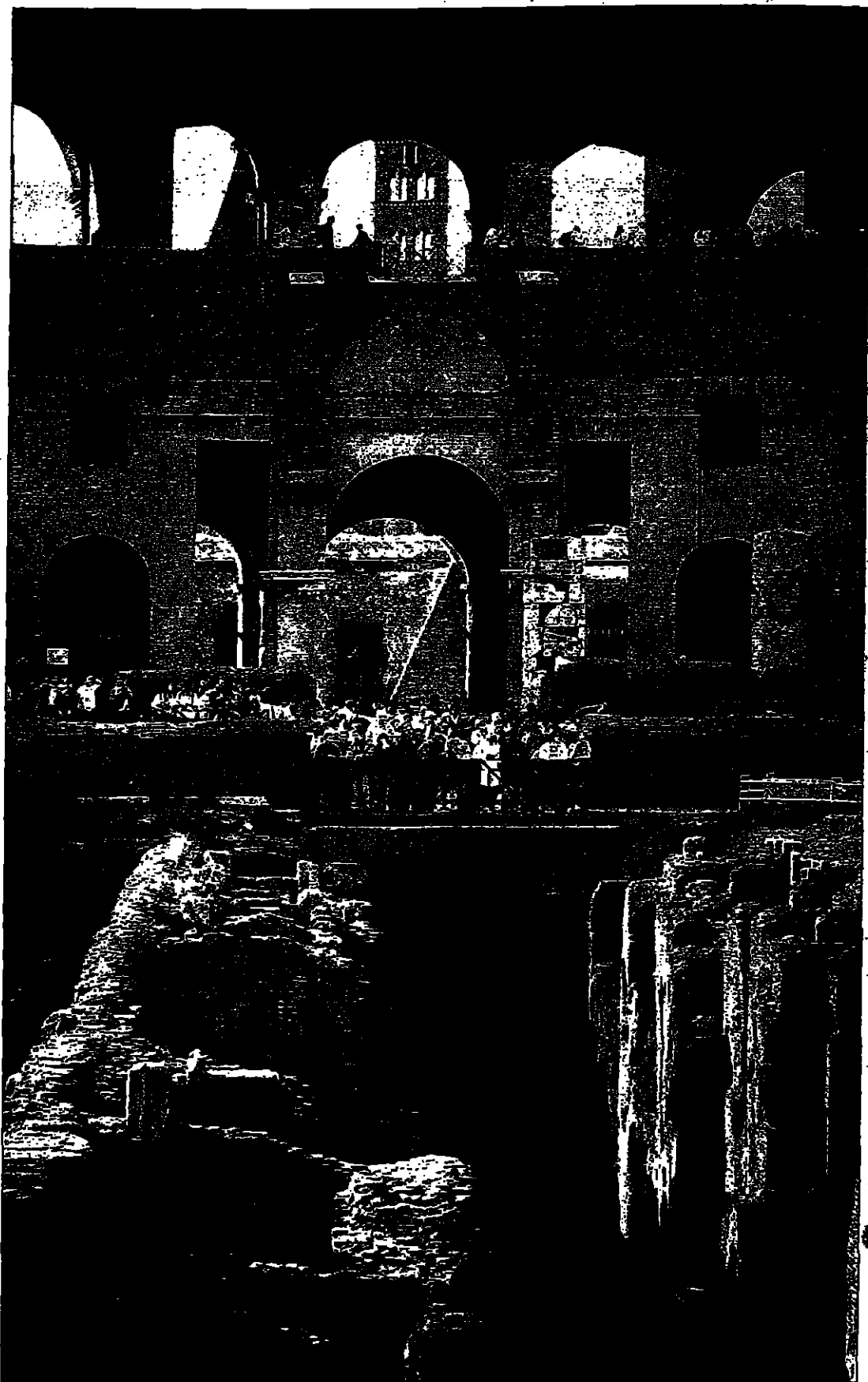
Historians and archaeologists will tell you that these were made by metal cramps used to erect the amphitheatre in the first place; the various accounts of their disappearance vary from the routine (they were removed and used for other building projects according to Roman architectural practice) to the criminal (they were looted by Pope Constantine II in the seventh century).

But Roman legend tells quite a different story. When the Barbarians took over Rome, so the story goes, they resolved to destroy the Colosseum as the supreme symbol of the power of the old empire. The way they decided to do it was to gouge little holes all over the building and fill them with gunpowder in the hopes of blasting the whole thing to smithereens. The fuses were duly set, but the Colosseum did not cede so much as a single stone in the ensuing explosion. Awed by their clamorous failure, the Barbarians concluded that the place was indestructible and made no further attempts to attack it.

Never mind that this story is quite implausible - to start with, gunpowder was quite unknown to the hordes of Goths, Huns and Vandals who sacked Rome repeatedly over the course of the fifth century. The point is that the Colosseum is looked upon as a charmed monument, something that bestows good luck on the whole city. The place may now be besieged by pollution, traffic and endless epidemics of weeds, but they seem no more threatening than the ravages of centuries gone by. There are even plans to use the Colosseum in the 2004 Olympic Games, should Rome be lucky enough to win them, as a backdrop to the wrestling event.

Perhaps the key to the Colosseum's charm is to take Byron's advice and avoid it by day altogether. You may miss out on the guts of the place, the animal cages and prison cells where the gladiators anxiously waited their turn in the days of Emperor Titus. But you also avoid the holes and pockmarks, the sad quarry of the proud stadium's stolen glories, the sense of one of the world's great wonders scarred and mutilated. Come instead by night, when the moonlight is these days supplemented by the soft orange glow of spotlighting that magically transforms the great hulk of brick and stone into the stuff of romantic dreams. As Byron wrote:

When the stars twinkle through the loops of time,
And the low night-breeze waves along the air
The garland forest, which the gray walls wear,
Like laurels on the first Caesar's head;
When the light shines serene but doth not glare,
Then in this magic circle raise the dead:
Heroes have trod this spot - tis on their dust ye tread.



Decline of the Roman Empire: the Colosseum is all too palpably falling to pieces. PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN HARRIS



would not doubt be isolated from the bustle of the modern city, surrounded by safety cordons and adorned with signs asking visitors not to take food or drink into a site at once so sacred and so profane. There might even be a special underground train taking visitors through the bowels of the stadium on a "Colosseum Experience", complete with waxwork gladiators, stuffed wild beasts and a soundtrack reproducing the cheers and hideous screams of ancient times.

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سكناء من الامم

Eat the dead donkey

In Mantua, northern Italy, Renaissance man meets avid carnivore, writes Harriet O'Brien

The weight watchers looked in pretty good shape. In fact we would have had slim reason to guess their common interest were it not for a welcoming sign to the International 'Weight Watchers' Reunion at the entrance of the chic little restaurant in Mantua. Dining out certainly seemed the ultimate in collective temptation and staunch self-denial, and as we tucked into steaming dishes of pasta and porcini we glanced with sympathy at the assembled calorie counters of Lombardy.

Yet perhaps they had good cause to be circumspect about the cuisine. Local taste in Mantua is regarded, even by other Italians, as more than mildly eccentric. Their principal peculiarity is *stracotto di asino*, or braised donkey, but they also concoct strange brews of broth – with generous helpings of Lambrusco added for good measure.

Such culinary habits, so the guide books informed us, became standard fare during the three centuries when the Gonzaga family ruled Mantua and the outlying area. From the early years of the 14th century until 1630 (when Hapsburg troops sacked the city), the dog-loving, horse-mad Gonzaga dukes held court with flourish – and, of course, their influence extended not just to hunting, food and finances, but also fine art. Dietary considerations aside, you come to Mantua to see the remaining legacy of the Gonzagas, feasting on the visual riches of Leon Battista Alberti, Andrea Mantegna and Giulio Romano.

Mantua might not come top of the tourist list in northern Italy. Most of its movable treasures have long since been

siphoned off by Florence's Uffizi and other galleries. And set in a flat, marshy landscape it can hardly boast attractive surroundings. Yet the ancient heart of the city contains lovely streets and handsome, intriguing buildings such as the medieval church of the Rotonda di San Lorenzo built in a perfect circle, the elegant clock tower of the Palazzo della Ragione. It is also a relatively peaceful place: unless you arrive at the very height of summer you won't get mown down by hordes of hasty sightseers. For the most part those who visit Mantua come with the quiet intent of admiring the art and architecture of three great men of the Renaissance.

Musician, playwright, mathematician, athlete, architect (the list goes on), Leon Battista Alberti came unerringly close to being the ideal Renaissance man. He designed his big, bold church of San Andrea in the city's old centre in 1472 as a sort of hybrid of Etruscan and Roman temples (complete with triumphal arch on the facade). The resulting airy spaciousness seems radical – particularly if you take as a point of comparison all

those bosses and buttresses of St George's Chapel in Windsor which was started on almost exactly the same date. You can't help gasping as you walk into the church: the wall decorations seem the ultimate in *trompe l'oeil*. Another Renaissance master, Andrea Mantegna, devised the interior (much of it completed after his death), with every available surface looking, at first glance, as if it is coated in carved marble. But you soon realise with an increasing sense of awe that most of this is painted illusion.

You find more of Mantegna at the ducal palace. The visitors' modest entrance belies the grandeur and

labyrinthine quantity of rooms here: even if your Italian is not up to scratch, it's a good idea to join a guided tour if only to avoid getting lost. Your trail will take you through stark halls displaying rediscovered frescoes by Antonio Pisanello, past huge Flemish tapestries of Raphael's cartoons, and to room after room sumptuously designed and decorated by that other great Renaissance (and Mannerist) exponent, Giulio Romano. Highlight of a visit here, however, is a sort of side-swipe into the 14th-century Castello di San Giorgio. Although there's not an enormous amount to see, you'll want to spend as



Family gathering: In the Camera degli Sposi at Mantua's ducal palace the Renaissance master Andrea Mantegna caught the mood of the dog-loving horse-mad household of Ludovico II Gonzaga

ITALIAN INSIGHTS

How to get to Mantua Harriet O'Brien paid £215 for a return Gatwick-Florence flight on Meridiana (0171-839 2222). She rented a car from Hertz (0390 996899) for £200 per week. If your sole destination is Mantua, then the most accessible airport is Verona, with Milan and Bologna as good alternatives.

How to get to Rome The best scheduled fare at present is on Debonair (0500 146200) from Luton to Rome's Ciampino airport. The company's lowest fare is £149.70 return, including tax. Sky Shuttle (0181-748 1333) and other discount agents offer cut-price charter and scheduled flights to Rome and many other Italian cities.

More information The Italian State Tourist Office, 1 Princes St, London W1R 8AY (0171-408 1254).

long as you can in the small Camera degli Sposi, with its wonderful frescoes by Mantegna, painted for Ludovico II Gonzaga and his wife Barbara of Brandenburg. Your visiting time is limited, since even your breath has a corrosive effect on the fragile painting. However, we managed to smile sweetly at the guards and gain an extra few minutes to absorb the Gonzaga family scenes (great dogs, fantastic backgrounds) and the cherubs and peacock perched precariously around the painted cupola, as well as to pinpoint the tiny self-portrait of Mantegna himself, shrouded among the marble-like decorative embellishment.

The most revolutionary work of Mantua's third great Renaissance hero lies at the other end of town, beyond more modern developments. Giulio Romano's Palazzo del Te was commissioned in 1527 by Federico II Gonzaga who wanted a home for his mistress. Here Romano transformed a set of old stables into an elegant palace and in so doing set in train the new Mannerist movement – defying Renaissance ideals by wilfully misusing classical motifs (huge keystones in the facades, and the unheard-of use of Tuscan columns). Inside, there's a wealth of wall decorations, from pretty stucco work

to riotous frescoes. The thundering titans of the Sala dei Giganti may seem a bit over the top, but the witty frescoes of the Salone dei Cavalli (Hall of Horses) are bound to appeal. Here Federico's many thoroughbreds stand proudly on ledges and look out at you from above the doorways.

Such a show of grandeur is a far cry from the mood of Mantua today, which is well-to-do in a low-key way. Back in the old part of town there's a cheerful mix of sleek style and stoic conservatism – as you wander through Piazza Mantegna you can't help being struck by the fact that a Giorgio Armani outlet sits expensively opposite a little haberdashery store, its shop-front festooned with buttons. The most attractive windows, though, are those of the cake shops – and there are many. The Mantovans are clearly keen on their cakes, and among the delicious displays of praline tarts, chocolate and orange torta and amaretto confections there's a reminder of their curious culinary taste: *torta di tagliatelle* is composed of sugar-coated pasta twirled into a bird's nest arrangement above a crumbly shortbread base. What a calorie count – quite enough to worry even the most wayward weight watcher.

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Alligators, pirhanas, poisonous snakes and spiders ... When you're surrounded by Bolivian wildlife, writes Steve Hide, you can really sense your position in the food chain



Gliding along Bolivia's Rio Beni, as a tree iguana looks on (top left)

PHOTOGRAPHS: SUE CUNNINGHAM/PLANET EARTH SOUTH AMERICAN PICTURES

Close encounters of the unkind kind

Take your shoes and socks off, get in the water and spread out," said Fico, the guide. Strange advice for a snake search, but guides usually know best, and this being Bolivia, with its own brand of macho Latino etiquette, we did what we were told.

Fico puffed on a cigarette as the line of gringos moved gingerly across the ankle-deep pool. Someone shouted. A large green snake lay half-submerged on a raft of water hyacinth. Fico grinned, triumphant. "See. The snake is not going to come to you. You have to go to him."

He had a point. If you want to see wildlife in South America you have to get stuck right in. Forget the jungle – which is too dark and dense to see a thing – and head for the swamps that ring the equatorial heart of the continent. Do not expect African-style safaris with balloon flights and champagne breakfasts. Nature here has rough edges.

In Bolivia these humid wetlands are called pampa and they swallow the back flow from the rivers that storm down the eastern Andes and into the Amazon. Their gateway is the small gold-trading river port of Rurrenabaque which lies at a geographical junction of mountain, jungle and pampa.

Leaving the town and the last green line of Andes, we had travelled by motor canoe up muddy rivers past sparse herds of cattle. Once we saw an old Dakota plane pancaked in a paddock, its propellers bent back. "Narcotraffickers" (drug-dealers), whispered the guide and the word was passed.

As the cattle herds thinned, so did the clumps of dry land. The riverbanks were wooded and dry, but beyond them, away from the river, lay fields of flooded pools choking with sedge grasses and water lilies. Among the drifting clouds of bugs stood wading birds of every type. Herons waited, heads cocked, for a frog to plop by. Less patient were flocks of parakeets that hustled among the moriche palms looking for fruit. Wading in the swamp and swatting mosquitoes, I felt like just another link in the food chain.

That night we made camp under plastic sheets-in trees by the river. Sunshine the next morning led to refreshing thoughts of swimming. So we set off for the deepest part of the river. No one, however, ventured far from the canoe. "Don't be scared of the alligators," Fico had said. "These caiman only eat the fish."

What sort of fish? "Piranhas." After our short swim we discovered that piranhas are mostly harmless. Some species are even vegetarian, but there is no movie mileage in seeing a cauliflower stripped to the stalk in three seconds, so the carnivorous ones get more press.

Flesh-eating piranhas mostly eat each other, or more likely the vegetarian types. A human is only in danger if swimming in isolated pools where carnivorous types have got trapped and not quite finished eating each other. Or if you are wearing red swimming trunks, explained Fico. And he showed us how to catch piranhas by hand. You need quick reactions and a bag of smelly meat. We dropped in chunks of bait until the water boiled with orange and

silver piranhas. Then some leapt clear of the surface, gnashing their gin-trap jaws. With a flat hand, Alberto, our other guide, deftly batted one into the canoe to frenzy about in the bilge water, sowing terror among those wearing sandals. Then, before the craft capsized, he flipped it back into the river.

Our river antics went on under the benign gaze of a family of capybara on the bankside. These rodents are the size of large pigs and are the New World equivalent of the hippopotamus. They spend most of the day up to their necks in water chewing aquatic grass. Colonial settlers

found them easy to hunt so capybara numbers dwindled until the church declared them a "fish" (because of their webbed hind feet) and only food for Fridays.

That evening we kept a vigil for fishing bats. They came swooping down to a still pool to snag fish on their harpoon-like claws, their catches glistening silver in the moonlight as they flitted back to the dark trees. Equally deft, by day, were the fishing kites balancing on the breeze with their forked tails.

Next day we pushed on up the river. I had hoped to see a giant river otter, but had to make do instead with a tree

iguana and a large terrapin hiding in the shallows. The terrapin had two tiny eyes and smelt of my dentist's aquarium. Its crinkle-cut shell was perfect to keep itself hidden in the rotten leaves – which it would have done except for its silly habit of panicking and trying to get away.

The tree iguana, on the other hand, kept confidently still but the vivid yellow-green colour was hard to miss. It was the sort of lizard that used to appear enlarged in 1950s sci-fi B movies knocking police cars around. Now it was in scale, 3ft long, and sprawled on a branch over the river. It wouldn't be so smug, I thought, if it had just read about the arana, or water-monkey fish, which "can leap 6ft into the air to snatch reptiles from overhanging vegetation".

Another dead loss at camouflage was the red stick insect I found clinging to a green leaf. "Why is it bright red if it was trying to look like a stick?" Because it was poisonous, explained Fico. If I rubbed it in my eyes I would go blind. I put it back on the bush and, washing my hands in the river, resolved never to wipe any insect on my face.

Spiders, of course, dominated our campfire conversations. Someone had seen a television documentary featuring an Amazonian arachnid so large "the jungle tribes make omelettes out of its eggs". Fico fiddled a large hairy spider from his hole in the ground with a long piece of grass. The spider reared up and bared its fangs – meanwhile distracting us from its more dangerous weapon, allergenic stomach fur – then scuttled back in the hole.

Morning brought us a three-toed sloth clinging in a high tree. Even through

binoculars it looked wizened and flea-bitten, with the glazed eyes and the fixed smile of a game-show host. Exactly once a week, explained the guide, it would slowly climb down the tree to defecate on the ground. An added entry to my anti-sloth list: anally retentive.

After four days, tropical torpor started to take its toll. No one looked up when a squadron of enormous jabiru storks flew low overhead. Few cameras clicked for the log-load of turtles drying out like stacked dishes in the sun. Not a head turned for the raucous call of the boatman, an ancient breed of bird with claws on its wings.

What did wake us up, though, was the "huff, huff, huff" of two pale-pink river dolphins circling the boat to offer glimpses of their bulbous heads, angular fins and long thin snouts. It was strange to see such large marine mammals 4,000 miles (as the fish swims) from the sea. But they seemed quite at home.

Three of us slipped over the side to join them in the river. We were a bit nervous – not of caiman or piranhas, but of the 650-volt, 6ft electric eels which also swim these waters. No way could Alberto and Fico persuade us they were harmless. However, the river dolphins ignored us so we gratefully clambered back on board and motored down river. There, some old Ford pick-up trucks waited to drive us back over the rutted tracks to the relative civilisation of Rurrenabaque.

Six hours and a cold beer later we counted our mosquito bites and our blessings: four days of dry weather and enough close encounters with wildlife to use small writing on postcards for weeks to come.

Jungle jaunts

Arrivals There are no direct flights from Britain to the Bolivian capital, La Paz. South American Experience (0171-976 5511) has a fare of £514 on Aerolineas Argentinas via Buenos Aires. From La Paz, microbuses take around 24 hours to reach Rurrenabaque, along the so-called "Death Road". The alternative is to fly on the airline run by country's air force TAM, which has flights from La Paz for about £30 one-way.

Getting organised Agencia Fluvial runs trips into the jungle. You can contact this company by sending a fax to the only machine in Rurrenabaque, on 00 591 832 2205. The number is frequently engaged.

How to navigate The American military Tactical Pilotage Chart N260 covers the area. It costs £8.50 from Stanfords, 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (0171-836 1321).



Simon Calder

At one alarming stage the bus is overtaken by a set of aircraft steps travelling at high speed

The most exciting moment in my first six years of life was when my father took me to Gatwick airport to see President Kennedy leave after a state visit to Britain. In the 1960s, there were no significant security controls, so we perched almost on the edge of the runway to watch Air Force One lift magnificently away, destination Washington DC. Decades later, I am

abashed to admit, the thrill of airports has not diminished. But for tourists like me it is difficult to get close enough to the heart of the airline business.

Then I stumbled across an "airside tour". On a short stopover in Vienna I followed some mysterious signs promising a Rundfahrt (round-trip). These lead you to a car park, where a bright white bus is waiting to take you a way on a magical demystification tour of Vienna airport.

Victor takes his bus out twice a day at weekends, mostly packed with Viennese wanting to get behind the scenes at an international airport. But transit passengers are welcome too, and even if you can decipher barely a scrap of some heavily accented German you are guaranteed a rewarding hour.

There are a couple of qualities you should know about Victor. One is his extraordinary ability to drive while simultaneously keeping his mobile audience in stitches at his comic presentation and rattling off statistics about the 10,000 park-plazens that the airport possesses. The other is that if ever there were a Eurovision planespotting contest, he would surely win it. He can spot an Airbus A340 at a distance of five miles, identify the airline and discern whence it is arriving.

So, in the care of the expert's expert, you drive through the security barriers to the airport apron. This is a revelation, like seeing an airport inside-out. You get a close-up of a tiny Tyrolean turbo-prop and a giant Airbus 747, its rear third exposed as cargo is loaded. At one alarming stage the

bus is overtaken by a set of aircraft steps travelling at high speed. Almost as worrying are the weird, bulbous passenger transfer buses that are double-ended and when being driven away from you seem, therefore, always to be reversing recklessly.

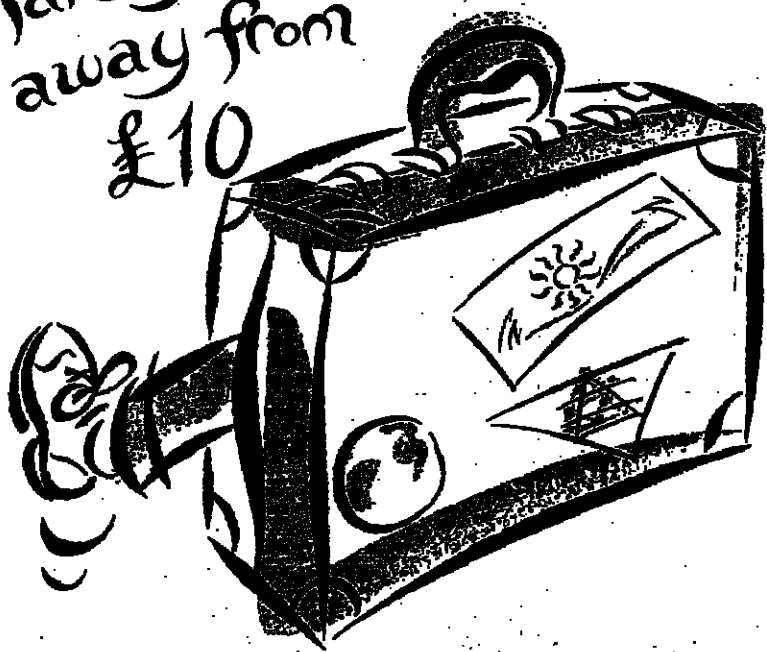
An Aeroflot Tupolev 134, one of the wilkiest old planes in the sky, causes a flutter as it screams skywards, temporarily drowning

out Victor's explanation of the "waves" of flights that depart and arrive together to make connections easy. For example, between 6.10pm and 7.10pm there are no scheduled departures, but in the next hour 10 planes are set to go.

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Next time you board a plane, at Vienna or elsewhere, listen to the background music played while the plane is on the ground. Presumably the intention is to soothe passengers' nerves. But on Monarch, the artist chosen is Annie Lennox. Audacious flyers are treated to "I don't want to wait in vain", followed by "Angel", which includes the memorable line "She's gone to meet her maker".

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Sea life in the heart of the city

Days out: The former home of the Greater London Council now houses a giant aquarium. Do the sea critters do it justice? By Emma Houghton

Everything about the recently opened London Aquarium promises to impress. Its location, for instance, is none other than the vast Edwardian monument of County Hall, former home of the Greater London Council, which boasts unrivalled views across the Thames to Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament.

On paper, the aquarium's vital statistics are equally spectacular. Billed as one of Europe's newest and largest displays of aquatic life, it took two-and-a-half years and £25m to build the 41 tanks into the 170,000 square feet of floor space. Between them they contain one million litres of specially filtered water and some 30,000 fish across 350 species, including all the old favourites of sharks, conger eels, stingrays and piranha.

Two huge tanks which descend the three levels of the aquarium offer uninterrupted views of marine life from the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, while another 39 tanks cover a wide range of other briny and freshwater habitats: the reef and living corals, the Indian ocean, the mangrove and the rainforest, the tropics and European waters. In the touch pool and beach pier you can develop a more hands-on relationship with various sea creatures, with the opportunity to tickle the curiously friendly rays, and handle hermit crabs, starfish and mussels.

The visitors

Emma Houghton, a freelance writer, went with her husband Jonathan Rees, and their three children, Joshua, six, Flan, four and Zachary, two.

Joshua: Some of it was good and some of it wasn't very interesting. I liked the conger eels and the tiny ones that glowed blue and red, but some of the plain fish were boring. I preferred the big tanks where there was room for loads of fish, they were much better than the small ones. I think a lot of the fish were nervous and scared. I liked the lights in the ceiling that made shadowy pictures on the wall, but the lights in the tanks gave me a headache looking at them.

I touched the ray and it felt all slimy, then I touched another one and it felt all rough. I was a bit afraid to touch them, but it was the best part, even if I didn't really like it. I think really I preferred the Sea Life centre we went to in Brighton.

Flan: It took a long time and I was a bit bored, but I liked saying "cheese, cheese" to the fish and playing a joke on them that I was going to give them cheese. They don't have cheese in aquariums.

I touched a flat fish in the water and it felt like a pancake, but I just hated the way that the water tasted like salt. I like sharks, so I pretended all of them were sharks. Actually I was scared of the sharks, but I couldn't really be scared because the glass was there. Sharks can get bigger than a giant, but I know giants don't exist. I wish I was a fish.

Zach: Oooh, look, fish, Dad! Fish, look, Mum, fish!

Jonathan: I can think of worse ways of spending an after-



Gl. Sea: the former headquarters of London's council is now home to species usually more common deep in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW BUURMAN

noon, especially if it's raining, but this didn't fill me with enthusiasm. Considering how many brilliant exhibits there were, it was really undersold. It felt completely unfinished and lacking in atmosphere – with a bit of decoration it could be vastly improved. Some of the tanks seemed very badly designed; if there were more than a few people

looking at the exhibits you could see absolutely nothing until they moved on, so you were standing around waiting a lot.

Since this cost £25m you'd have thought they could have invested a bit more on information. I'd have liked to have seen a lot more about the fish and their natural habitats – what was there was pitifully

small, and often in really awkward positions. I did like the way the place was laid out, a warren of underground chambers, although it wasn't obvious whether you'd missed things. With a bit of extra thought and attention it could be a lot better, but as it stands, I preferred County Hall with Ken Livingstone in it.

Emma: I love fish and am pretty easily pleased, so it was a surprise to be so disappointed by an aquarium. Everything conspired to give a poor impression: the entrance system seemed chaotic, the café was dull, the bar was closed, and the floor in the toilet was muddy – with low paper strewn everywhere. The whole place had

an air of being put together in a hurry.

There was little attempt at atmosphere beyond a few mangrove trees, and the bizarre booming and trickling sounds piped across the sound system were more irritating than anything else. And I was amazed how little information there was. At most places like this you are overwhelmed

with facts and displays, but apart from the odd video placed awkwardly in the corridors, and undersized pictures of fish with a line or two of description, there was simply nothing to tell you about what you were looking at.

Even so, the larger tanks were very impressive, especially looking up from the bottom at the fish swimming

above your head – there's such a hypnotic beauty in their perfectly synchronised shoals. Sadly, however, the luminous lighting in the tanks made it difficult to watch for long periods, and there was something about their expressions that was dispiriting. I know fish always look disconsolate, but in this case I think they might have a point.



Rays rise happily to be touched and tickled by children

Are we nearly there? Museums week

Well, we are there – at least as far as museums are concerned. Today marks the beginning of Museums Week, where the country's houses of interaction, information and history make an exhibition of themselves. If such places still evoke a scenario of aches, dust and small print, now is the time to make some discoveries as over 700 museums will be putting on special events during the week, many geared especially for kids.

Liverpool Museum, William Brown St, Liverpool, Merseyside L3 8EN (0151-478 4080) Five floors-worth including vivarium and aquarium, land transport, natural history, antiquities, ethnology and space and time. Opening on 23 May is Missing Links – the story of evolution introduced by the robot Dr Robert Leakey (the "world famous discoverer") and some of his moving animatronic colleagues.

Commonwealth Institute, London W8 (0171-603 4535) 21 May sees the launch of the Commonwealth Experience which includes Heliride, a simulated helicopter journey over Malaysia. On the ground, other attractions include Interactive World, Commonwealth exhibitions and art exhibitions.

Manchester Museum, Manchester (0161-275 2634) Live and kicking with animals and plants from around the world, including live snakes, lizards and fish. On 17 and 24 May: "A Walk, Talk and Hop through the World of Frogs".

Keith Harding's World of Mechanical Music, The Oak House, High Street, Northleach, Gloucestershire GL54 3ET (01451 860181) Practically any instrument that doesn't need a musician to play it will wind up here.

Burton Art Gallery & Museum, Bideford (01237 471455) Art workshops where children get a chance to become sculptors for the day: 19-23 May.

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (01865 278015) One of a rash of hidden treasure trails around the country, 25 May.

National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN (0171-747 2885) Costume Parade and children's quizzes, 21 May, 5-6.45pm.

Preston Hall Museum, Nr Witney (01865 400002) The Diceplayers return. Special events include drama by time travellers, talks and magic, 24/25 May.

Museum of Science and Industry, Liverpool Rd, Castlefield, Manchester M3 4FP (0161-832 2244) The old railway station will be opening its new gallery, Fibres, Fabrics and Fashion and more new hands-dirty interactive exhibits.

Croydon Clocktower, Croydon (0181-253 1022) Some "evocative smells" can be enjoyed on 20 May.

Further details on activities for Museums Week can be found on the Internet at www.museumsweek.co.uk or by telephoning the information line on 0891 484752

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Getting there: situated between Westminster Bridge and Jubilee Gardens, the London Aquarium (0171-967 8000) is a few minutes' walk from Westminster Tube, Waterloo and Eurostar mainline stations.

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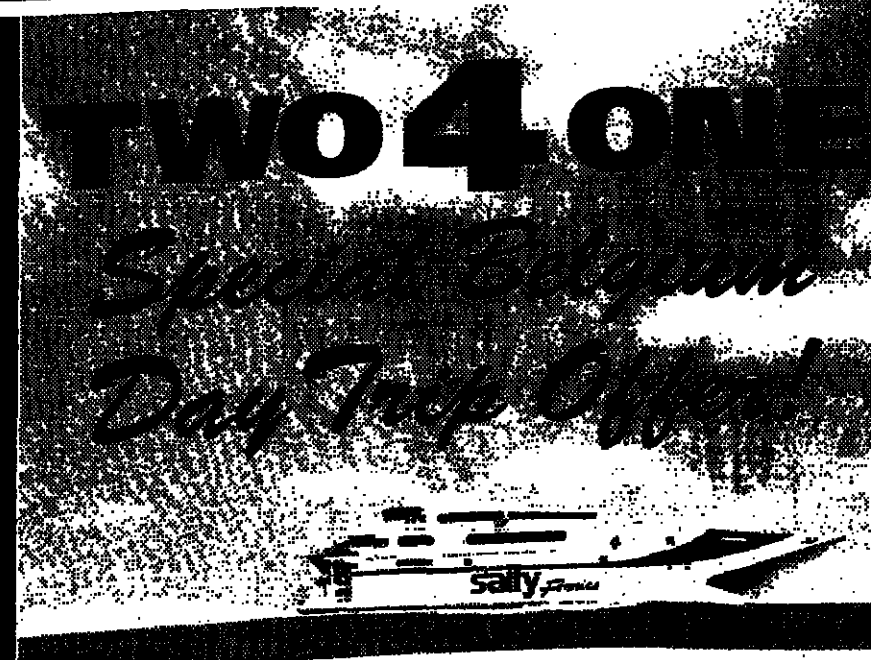
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Rescuing a travesty

Workshop: Anna Pavord has ideas for a difficult plot

We have recently moved into a Victorian terrace house in Battersea. The garden (max 45ft x 25ft) faces north-west, has what seems like builder's waste for soil, and is on two levels - with a small patio area leading from the house to steps up to the "lawn". This is surrounded by shallow flower beds which grow ivy in profusion and some leggy roses, but not a lot else. Slugs and snails - either home-grown or escaped from our neighbour's dandelion plot, or the cemetery we back on to - have destroyed almost everything that hasn't already been strangled by ivy. The main feature is a laburnum tree in the north-west corner, which grows next to the children's Wendy house, built by a previous owner.

I would love to create a herbaceous border to crowd out the weeds. Once made, I hope it could largely look after itself. But as a novice gardener with two young children to look after, I'm daunted by the prospect of what will grow where, getting the scale right in a small area and finding plants which can cope without constant watering in the summer.

Christina Harley's problem seemed to be finding the right plants for the right places in her garden. Unfortunately it wasn't that simple. The real difficulties were more daunting. Plants can often provide quick-fix solutions, a magic wand of colour and texture to soften, clothe and disguise problem areas, ugly paving or unwanted views. Not here.

This was a garden where nearly everything needed fixing, not just the plants. Some cowboy landscaper had "done" the place for the previous owner and it was difficult to believe that anyone had parted with good money for such a travesty.

You step out into the garden from a lean-to conservatory built over the narrow passage that runs up one side of the house. The patio Ms Harley mentioned was an area of cracked concrete, laid so that the rainwater collected in a pool by the door instead of running into the drain. A bit of a wall had been thrown up to separate this level from the next. The landscaper had used breezeblocks on end, cracked bits of concrete paving and the odd brick, but had left out the mortar. The wall bulged malevolently, oozing soil on to the area below.

I'm not going to go on with this catalogue. It makes me too angry. I'm sad, too, for the Harleys who are anxious to create an oasis of delight for their two young children, but have little time or money to spend on their garden. What can be done about it?

Well, there is a good, sturdy brick wall at the back of the garden, topped by a square-sectioned trellis. The Wendy house and the laburnum are in the left-hand corner. Putting those two things next door to each other was a master stroke by the diabolical landscaper. Fortunately the Harley children, James and Anna, looked far too sensible to poison themselves on laburnum seeds.

Cats come through the trellis, said Ms Harley, but they can be dissuaded by a strip of chicken wire fixed along the back. There's a *Clematis montana* planted against the wall, yet most of its growth is tangled high up in the branches of the laburnum, and the wall itself is rather bare. A good new shoot had sprung from the base of the plant. That ought to be tied in horizontally against the wall, so that it, too, does not disappear into the stratosphere. After the clematis has flowered, the Harleys



The Harleys want an oasis of delight for their children. They need to take a deep breath...

NICOLA KURTZ

need to take a deep breath and cut it down to within a few feet of the ground (leaving the new shoot). This will force the plant to provide more new shoots from the base. Then these can be tied in individually to the wall and the trellis, so that the whole of the back boundary will eventually be covered in the clematis's leaves and flowers.

C. montana is not the best choice for a small garden, as it is so rampant, but properly managed it can provide a good backdrop for other plants. When it is trained and tied in on the back boundary, its flowering will provide a wonderful smack-in-the-eye effect.

The Harleys need to hang on to that vision. From here on, it is bad news all the way. The brick wall making the right-hand boundary of the garden was thrown up very quickly, only one brick thick. Already it is slumping drunkenly into the neighbour's space. In the not very long term it must be replaced.

In the short term, the Harleys can give themselves more privacy by repairing the sagging trellis along the top. Its posts need to be replaced with proper supports at least 3in x 3in, properly set in the soil. Decent contractors use augers to bore holes which disturb the surrounding ground remarkably little. The supports must be absolutely rigid.

Ivy covers large sections both of this thin brick boundary wall and the wood

panel fence on the left. Like the wall, the fence needs work. The panels themselves are sound, but the supports have not been put in deep enough, and the whole structure wobbles worse than Peter Snow's swingometer.

The ivy is certainly rampant, but given the nature of the supports I'd be cautious of trying to tear it down. It would probably bring fence and wall with it. The greyish leaved ivy on the brick wall was actually doing a good job near the house where the wall meets the conservatory, for there was no planting space in the concrete patio and, spreading from its original position in the earth of the border above, it softened a difficult area.

It certainly needs to be stopped from spreading any further along the boundary. Ms Harley could try clipping the ivy close to the wall. It looks bare when you first do it, but sprouts fresh leaves to give a neat effect rather like a hedge. The same thing could be done with the golden ivy on the board fence. Ivies are not good on these kinds of fences. The tendrils get between the boards and force them apart.

Because of the tiny strips of earth round the edge of the lawn left no room for proper planting, I suggested the Harleys widen the back border against the one good wall and, for the moment, concentrate their planting there, enriching

the soil as much as they can. This season they could use annuals: heliopsis, sun, tobacco plants for scent, lobelia. Losing some of the lawn would be no hardship. It is in very poor condition. It could be refurbed, but it would be a waste of money to do that without loosening and enriching the ground underneath. It gives every impression of being compacted and starved. While the children are small and need crawling and kicking space, I think I'd live with the present lawn, tired though it is.

Now comes the critical bit: the patio and the so-called retaining wall. Three strangely shaped steps lead up from the tiny lower level to the upper level and the lawn which is vaguely rounded in shape. My instinct would be to alter the relative size of the two areas, to make the pinched patio area big enough at least to take a couple of chairs. That would mean pushing back the retaining wall and disposing of the spoil. All rubbish has to be carted out through the house, so this is not a suggestion that's lightly made. But the patio and the retaining wall have to be rebuilt anyway, even if the patio stays the present size. I suggested doing everything, including the steps, in London stock brick which would match the house. Expensive. But until the existing muddle is resolved, no amount of planting can retrieve the situation.

Weekend work

Setting out plants grown from seed is taking up most of my time at the moment. The first brave batch of snapdragons "Sonnet Mixed" (Dobbies £1.68) has already been planted out. This is too soon for safety, but there were no more windowsills to accommodate seed trays and the cold frame is also full. I thought of them as I flew over the snow-covered Brecon Beacons this week.

Nicotiana and yellow French marigolds are waiting to be pricked out. They will be making a later appearance in the garden than they should be. The nicotiana "Fragrant Cloud" (Thompson & Morgan £1.19) is one I used last year and loved: white-flowered, about three feet tall and heavily scented.

The germination of the morning glory "Heavenly Blue" (Thompson & Morgan £1.59) is a disaster - a solitary seedling gazing glumly from the kitchen window at its fellows were supposed to fill. Fortunately there is time to sow again. Morning glories always sulk, turn yellow and rot off if they catch cold. The asters ("Comet Improved Mixed", Mr Fothergill £1.45) are hulking great plants that could have been planted out weeks ago, if the weather were less draughty. It's dwarfier than my usual favourites, but I want it for a foreground planting.

It's simpler, of course, to buy strips of bedding plants at the garden centre - except that the choice is so limited. Choose plants that are compact and

leafy. Avoid straggly plants, even though they may be in flower. A bedding plant that is already flowering in mid-May is usually signalling that it is starved and wants to get the whole business of producing seed over as quickly as possible.

When planting bedding plants, add a handful of general-purpose fertiliser, such as Growmore, to each square yard of ground. When planting in pots, mix some water-retaining polymer such as Broadleaf P4 to the compost. This will prevent it drying out so quickly during the summer months.

You can also incorporate a slow-release fertiliser, such as Osmocote. This is temperature sensitive. When the weather is cool and plants growing slowly, less fertiliser is released than when plants are growing quickly in warm weather.

Lilies will benefit from a mulch of leaves or compost. Those in pots will need a weekly feed of liquid fertiliser. Spread slug pellets around any that are still close to the ground.

Prune wall-trained specimens of japonica (*Chaenomeles japonica*) when they have finished flowering. Tie in any new growths that you want to keep and cut back the rest so that only two or three sets of leaves are left. My best japonica died on the hoof, just as it was coming into flower. It happened almost overnight. I suspect firelight. I've planted another one in a different place - *Chaenomeles* "Moerloosii", which is pink and white like apple blossom.

Anna Pavord

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Chelsea's eclectic mix ranges from the traditional to the revolutionary. Above, work begins on the Yves St Laurent display

There is undeniably a market for Mr Cooper's ideas. He has twice designed gardens based on his last Chelsea one, with a rubber patio and a back project, although without the unusual tree decorations.

Satan's bug: the vine weevil **NHPA**

As the team members, chairmen and producers have changed over the past half century so the character of the programme has changed too. We now make it our policy not to be given any prior warning of the questions, so one finds oneself waiting with baited breath in case a real stinker is posed. Some of the questions we have been asked have been quite extraordinary; they include advice on how to stop frogs knocking over waterlilies, how to keep a neighbour's peacock from attacking the plants and, more recently, suggestions for planting a "politically correct" window box in the week before the General Election!

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Campaigners are up in arms over plans to develop one of Britain's most important battlefields. Matthew Brace provides some strategic advice

Historical research has unearthed important finds and recently an ecologist and battlefield enthusiast said that many of the hedgerows skirting the field were there at the time of the battle. However, Mr Goodchild is not alone in his view. For numerous groups of residents across Britain, whether they be

Mr Goodchild is not alone in his view. For numerous groups of residents across Britain, whether they be

But doesn't this assault on officialdom smack of Nimbyism? "No," Sir Antony insists. "Nimbyism is hypocrisy. It is telling someone not

- Understand the nature of the plan: try to look at it through the eyes of Sir Humphrey and the men who drew it up
- Understand the nature of the planners: refrain from attacking any individual or group or official or department until you know precisely who your true enemies are
- Be vigilant: place your spies and act quickly on their reports
- Create a command structure and choose an action committee
- Raise your funds: car boot sales organising with military precision by retired colonels or the WI
- Choose a campaign slogan: short and simple
- Make clear your objectives
- Get the press involved: local papers love a good campaign to get behind
- Keep records of all correspondence and send copies to eminent people
- Study your law books to find legal loopholes

Despite the plight of Gastons Field and others like it, he believes the tide has turned in favour of the public. "I think the worst days are over. Local

Whether Sir Antony's words have come too late for the Tewkesbury campaigners is not clear. Earlier this month the Department of Environment exercised a "Section 14" on the site, which means the Secretary of

State for the Environment. John Prescott, may "call in" the application for a governmental decision which could end in an over-turning of the plans. Steven Goodchild is holding out hope. "I can't believe that with the strong objections from English Heritage and others

'How to Beat Sir Humphrey' by Sir Antony Jay is available from all good bookshops, priced £6.99, or direct from Long Barn Books, Ebrington, Gloucestershire GL55 6NW

MAIN PHOTO:
MARY EVANS

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On call: Zac Ludgrove and Tom Harbison rescuing last-gasp fish

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW BLURMAN

Emergency ward tench

John Windsor catches Britain's first commercial fish rescue service

Rain may have fallen this week, but the drought dilemma continues. And as pond water levels to below last summer's, Britain's first commercial fish rescue service has been launched.

The fish ambulances are two Toyota pick-up trucks customised with 400-gallon fibreglass water tanks fitted with oxygen bottles.

Zac Ludgrove and Tom Harbison, who founded Sunflower Fisheries in Laxfield, Suffolk, just over a year ago, expect their first emergency calls in about a month's time, when owners of ponds see their carp gobbling desperately for air on the surface. Mr Ludgrove, 24, says: "Low water levels are going to cause chaos".

They have negotiated an agreement with the government's Environment Agencies in Ipswich, Norwich and the Midlands that enables licences to net last-gasp fish to be processed within 24 hours. It usually takes a fortnight by post. "It would have been a cruelty for them not to agree," says Mr Ludgrove. The pair are prepared for high-speed dashes by road to collect the vital documents.

Their service is free. Not only that, they will buy the fish they rescue. That means owners of ponds, lakes or irrigation reservoirs can turn an environmental crisis into a nice little earner, pocketing anything between £100 and £5,000 for fish that might have died.

Mr Ludgrove and Mr Harbison, 22, village chums, started their business as a fish exchange rather than a rescue service, cropping surplus fish from domestic ponds and selling them to angling clubs. But last summer the emergency calls began: they rescued 40,000 fish in 20 call-outs.

The infirmaries at Sunflower Fisheries are two 10m-gallon reservoirs newly excavated at a cost of £4,000, and several small holding ponds. When I visited them I saw victims of white carp pox with fungoid scabs the size of 50p pieces

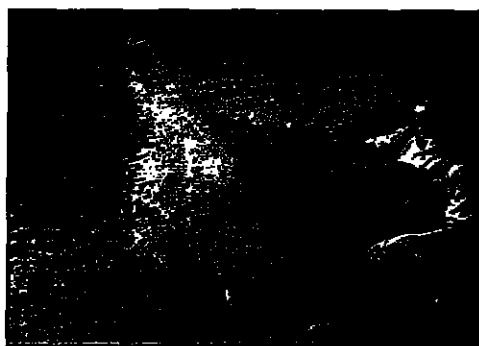
swimming near a piped cascade of bright, oxygen-filled water. Such stress diseases, caused by overcrowding and inadequate food and oxygen, are not contagious. But 30 fish from each licensed netting must still be analysed by the Environment Agency.

Fishing is the country's biggest sport, and Mr Ludgrove reckons they could sell an extra £50,000 worth of fish a month – if only they could lay hands on them. As the drought worsens, they may get their chance. (There is certainly no shortage of fishponds. The Ordnance Survey map in their office shows country lanes where nearly every cottage has a pond, sometimes two. The map reminded me of the view from the air, approaching German cities – except that there the ponds are swimming pools.) "We manage 500 to 600 ponds in the area," he says, "but there are many more, some of them unexplored. The fish sitting in them are money to be earned, a great unrealised resource".

Their greatest obstacle is pond-owners' ignorance. TV newsreels about industrial pollution in rivers show silvery dead fish bobbing on the surface. "So pond-owners assume that if no dead fish are to be seen, everything below the surface must be hunky-dory".

But fish killed by lack of oxygen do not float: they lose buoyancy and sink out of sight. The high pressure and humidity of a single thunderstorm can send to the bottom every mature fish in a pond. "We once drove past a farm where we could see the fish gobbling for air and stopped to offer our services to the farmers' wife. She as good as told us to bugger off. But six weeks later she was on the phone in tears. Her fish had died".

Dead fish on the bottom pollute ponds with their oils. "When we net the dead fish out, it's like an oil slick and smells disgusting. The worst thing is, it's preventable."



It takes only three years, he explained, for a pond or lake to reach "stocking density", with the mature fish fiercely competing among themselves for food and oxygen and eating their own spawn. That is the time to crop the fish, before they become stunted and die.

Some waters hold up to 400lb of fish per acre. "So why not earn a few bob?" he suggests. He buys for £4 per lb, for example, any size of tench, a greenish or bronze fish with small scales that competes poorly against carp in the pond but is prized by anglers for its sport. His selling prices per 100: 2in-4in long £60, 8in-10in £375, with reductions for bigger orders. He sells tench over 10in long for £5.85 per lb. "We can sell tench like hot cakes to angling clubs." Other species on offer are carp – common, mirror and crucian – rudd, roach, bream, gudgeon and perch. Their pick-up trucks have delivered fish to clubs as far afield as Scotland.

Mr Ludgrove and Mr Harbison are not anglers themselves. They see quite enough of the angling fraternity – club members who crowd round the pick-ups as specimen fish of 15lb or more are unloaded, weighing them, posing with them for photographs and arguing over what to name them – Jaws, or Big Bertha, or Twenty Pound Tessie. Mr Ludgrove says: "If I had to go angling at weekends, I'd go mad. I'd just sit on the bank and pull my hair out".

As they don their rubber chest waders and tug at their seine nets – up to 38ft deep, from cork floats down to lead weights – they steel themselves to dredge up plenty besides fish: old bikes, cars, boots. There was even an empty safe once. The police took it away. Their dream is to bring to the surface a crock of gold.

Sunflower Fisheries, Sunflower Farm Barns, Laxfield, near Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 8HP (01728 638733).

The trouble about living in an old farmhouse is that the building can play endless tricks on you. Friends find it delightful that the bedroom floors undulate like waves of the sea – but little do they realise what problems you stir up if you try to make improvements.

My most recent knock-down, drag-out contest was with a bathroom which we decided to refurbish. Nothing could be done about the slope of the floor, but at least we would get rid of the pock-marked plaster, install a new window, replace the scruffy tiles and level the bath.

Enter Leslie, our local builder – a man of exacting standards. It was no good trying to patch and paste, he said. The old



Duff Hart-Davis

nail through an electric cable and plunged the house into darkness.

Recovering from the shock (not physical, fortunately), I summoned the man from whom I had ordered a new carpet and set him to work. Before he finished, I had to go out, and when I returned, he had left.

I rushed upstairs to admire the fine, blue expanse, but when I took one step forward – squelch! Ye Gods, the new carpet was saturated. The buffoon had holed a pipe in the airing cupboard.

'I rushed to admire the fine blue expanse, but when I took one step forward – squelch!'

window would have to be hit out, the plaster hit down, the tiles bit off. Anything less would look as bad as before.

By the end of Day One, the room looked as though a bomb had gone off. Removal of the plaster revealed an immense lintel inexplicably embedded in the stonework. Shifting of the bath betrayed the fact that floorboards were rotten.

For several more days, chaos reigned. Then, after two coats of sand-and-cement had gone on to the walls, followed by two of plaster, order began to return. With the new window fixed, and crisp white tiles in place, I was foolish enough to hope the room would soon be back in use.

You should have seen us trying to level the bath. With me flat on my back, twiddling the adjustable legs, and Leslie directing operations from above, ridiculous conversations took place.

"Higher him up in the back corner," I was instructed. "Now, drop him in this corner."

"I can't. He's off the floor anyway."

"Christ! He's nearly an inch out..."

It took us hours to realise that the cast-iron bath itself was warped, and in the end we had to compromise. Then we were at the mercy of the plumber. Three times he claimed to have reconnected the bath, and three times he left pipes leaking.

It fell to me to do the decorating. This went reasonably well until, thinking to secure a loose floorboard, I put a

I turned off the stop cocks. Now we needed a proper plumber instantly. Recourse to the Yellow Pages put us on to a man in Stroud. Miraculously, he came at once and swept into action.

In a couple of minutes he discovered a pinhole in a cold-water pipe – the product of decay, rather than violence. In a trice he cut out the offending section. Then suddenly he called for bread, to act as blotting paper and stop dribbles while he soldered a new piece in. Duffily, I gave him a slice of my wife's finest home-made wholemeal loaf, complete with olive oil and sunflower seeds.

"Don't worry," he assured me. "It'll all come out in the bath."

New pipe in place, stop cocks back on. What's this? No water running into the roof tank. "Blocked valve," the plumber announced, whizzing up into the loft. "I'll give you a new one."

Two minutes later he was down again, waving the old valve, solid with rust. Away went, with a squeak in his pocket, having done a brilliant job.

Too late, I realised that after one flush the lavatory cistern would not fill. The bread! Greatly daring, I dismantled the ball cock. Right in the nozzle, sealing it perfectly, was a single sunflower seed.

With a feeling of triumph, I put everything back together. A month after work started, the bathroom is again in commission, and quiescent – but I have a nasty feeling it may be planning further retaliation.

The mother of all freeloaders

The business of procreation is demanding and downright dangerous for birds. While they're raising young they have little time to find food for themselves, and nest sitting, whether at ground level or in the branches of a tree, is far more life-threatening than living on the wing.

No wonder the female European cuckoo, *cuculus canorus*, has devised a way of avoiding such worries. As a nest parasite, she shirks the responsibility of parenthood altogether by duping birds like robins, meadow pipits, warblers and dunlocks to look after her eggs and her young. Meanwhile her mate's distinctive call (quite unlike her bubbling chuckle) has become the familiar spring herald.

The habits of this bird may appear bizarre, but the resulting myth and folklore seem even stranger. Two centuries ago, the disappearance of the cuckoo in late summer led to a popular belief that the bird actually turned into a sparrow hawk. Several types of cuckoo do indeed resemble birds of prey, but this has probably evolved as a crafty method of deterring predators.

Many country stories are

She dumps her young on others, eats their eggs, and disappears. The female cuckoo has remarkable habits, writes Helen Lewis

also told about why small birds can be seen mobbing cuckoos. This happens to the adult female because the small birds know that she is nest hunting and they are only trying to protect their own eggs. The cuckoo spends much time waiting in trees and monitoring the nesting activities of potential hosts so that she can synchronise egg production to coincide with theirs.

Once a newly laid nest of eggs is chosen, the cuckoo takes one egg, flies off and eats it, returning immediately to lay her own. The sight of a cuckoo in flight with an egg in her bill

led to one belief that the bird laid its egg away from the host's nest then carried it there when the bird was out feeding. Another theory was voiced in an old children's song which describes the cuckoo as having to suck other birds' eggs to "make her song clear".

The cuckoo's ability to lay an egg on demand is because, unlike most birds, she can retain it inside her body for up to 24 hours, giving it a head start on the host's clutch. She may lay between 10 and 25 eggs in any one season, and to prevent them being detected, they are coloured to match those of the host – cuckoos which inhabit pipits' nests lay spotted eggs, while those using the redstarts' nests in Europe lay pale blue ones.

When the young cuckoo hatches, it will hunch its back and push the legitimate eggs out of the nest. From then on it will have its adopted mother's undivided attention – and it is fed not just by her but by other nearby birds as well. With its deafening "feed me" call and its bright orange throat, the young cuckoo is, apparently, irresistible to most birds – except of course, the real cuckoo mother.



Irresistible: a young cuckoo is fed by a tree pipit

PHOTOGRAPH: PLANET EARTH

But how does the young cuckoo learn its adult call? And why doesn't it automatically copy the song of its host parent? Some country folk thought the parent cuckoo would sit and teach the young once it had left the nest – yet the theory was difficult to sustain, bearing in mind the cuckoo's silence towards the end of June. In the 19th century it was thought that cuckoos learnt their adult call during winter migration or in the following spring after their return. However, the greatest

question has always been why the cuckoo became such a freeloader in the first place. Some believed the bird to be hermaphrodite, giving this as a reason why two cuckoos were supposedly never seen together. A different, more intriguing theory was put forward by the 18th-century French naturalist, Vaillant. He believed the birds were ardent lovers so they had no time for the niceties of household chores. Sounds reasonable, but personally I'd back the danger-dodging theory.

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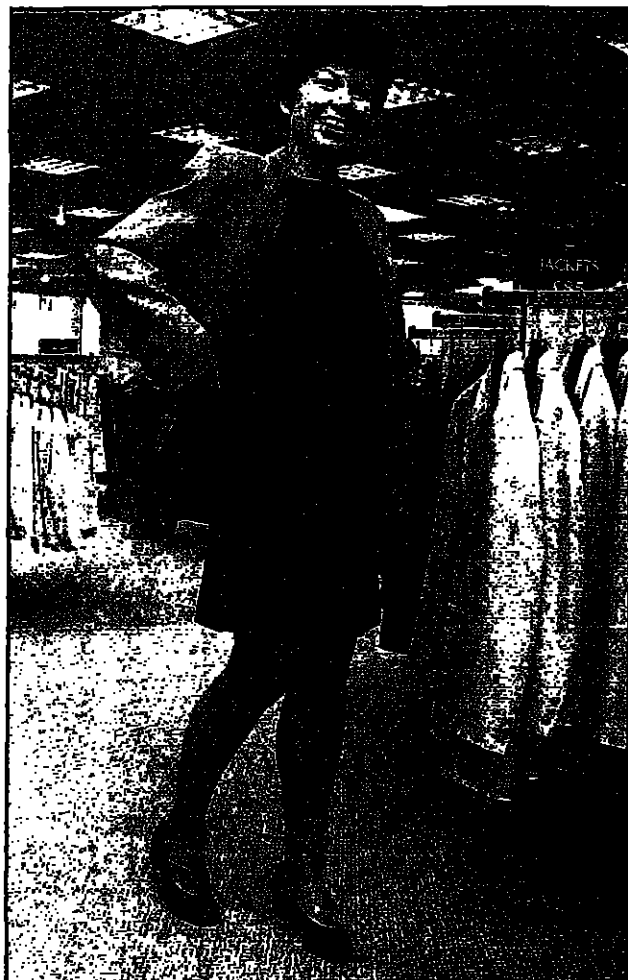
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all consuming

The human shopping trolleys

John Windsor discovers how good the major stores are at spending your money for you



Perfect: Researcher Suzanne Wilkinson makes her pick

No time to shop? Then choose a personal shopper - one of the new, American-style in-house store assistants trained to serve shoppers who have no time and, dare one say it, no taste. No time to choose a personal shopper? Then heed the advice of Suzanne Wilkinson.

She tested the skills of personal shoppers at five big London stores, in her role as consumer research editor of the Good Housekeeping Institute's magazine *Good Housekeeping*. She liked the service at one store so much that she returned to be personally shopped in her own time. Was it Harrods, Selfridges, Debenhams? No, it was Marks and Spencer, which has put its first personal shoppers on the floors of its Finsbury Pavement, London, store.

Two other M&S stores, in Manchester and Birmingham, also have them. "Choosing a personal shopper is a bit like choosing a hairdresser," says Ms Wilkinson, a mother of four. "You go for the stylist, not the salon."

The service at the stores she visited is free. And at M&S in Finsbury Pavement, where up to 20 of the 30 personal shoppers are on duty at the lunchtime peak, she found

there was no difficulty getting served. At other stores, appointments have to be booked up to a fortnight ahead. And there are questionnaires to be filled in.

She was in search of an outfit for the office. "I needed advice on skirt lengths, styles and brighter colours, which suit me best," she says. "It's too easy to go for the baggy grey look." She found that the personal shopper, Ms S. Val Copley, was in tune with her taste and well versed in matching - and matching - although on her first visit she chose for her an extra-long skirt that she would not have chosen herself. "I like it, it's really different," Ms Wilkinson says. "It has brought a lot of favourable comment back at the office". The outfit of jacket, skirt, top and belt, cost £124. She had set a £250 limit.

"The fact that I went back to my own time to get a summer wardrobe shows that I felt it was worth doing," she says. "I felt I was being given the sort of service that we were used to 40 years ago. You can not only achieve more in less time - it's also good for people who are less confident and would like others to see them with a fresh eye."

On her return visit she bought two outfits - the first a bright green jacket that she would have chosen herself, with a navy dress with green flowers that she would not have done. "But they do complement one other. I've worn the outfit to work - it's simple and summery". Price £110.

Then a washable baby-pink suit at £75. "As for putting something with it, I would have gone for a body. But Val said: 'There are some nice silky tops on a floor upstairs'. I probably wouldn't have wandered up there. That's another advantage of personal shoppers. They are not only trained to have an eye for what suits you, they know the stock and are prepared to run around to fetch it."

"I took 12 or 14 silky tops with me into the changing room. Normally only two or three would be allowed and I would have had to get dressed

again to go out and choose more. But with personal shoppers around, there is no security problem."

It took less than an hour to choose both outfits: "a condensed shopping trip". The other stores? Harrods: the jacket of the Apriori suit chosen for her (£248.95) has a shaped flame-red jacket that slims her - "an overwhelming success: they had me well suited".

Selfridges: Extensive questionnaire, photograph and a new look for her; a Betty Barclay ribbed jumper - "I'd never have worn it tucked into the skirt". But the shaped belt,

5cm wide instead of 3cm, made her size 14 waist look like a size 12 (£170.95).

Dickins & Jones: not much time spent finding out her needs and more attention given to colour than her preferences; St John trouser suit with vest (£860, well above budget) aged her.

Debenhams: personal shopper had good knowledge of fashion and designers, gave opinions freely, and most garments selected suited Ms Wilkinson's personality, shape and taste - the bright blue Kalico suit (£159) made her look and feel younger. But the changing room was poky.

Taking advice: Suzanne meets her personal shopper, Val Copley

... she likes the green jacket, but what goes with it? Bright is best

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I am the personal shopper's dream

... but what I really wanted was a jacket just like my grandfather used to wear

I hate shopping for clothes. I prefer buying antiques. When I presented myself to be personally shopped at Marks and Spencer's store in Finsbury Pavement, I had in mind a summery off-white linen jacket of the sort my grandfather used to wear on the bowling green. Perhaps not far short of an antique, after all.

On the menswear floor I was confronted by thickets of dark suits. It seems I was a little ahead of myself as far as the seasons are concerned.

"Officially," said Walla Idris - a charming Sudanese with an American accent who was to be my personal shopper - "Jackets like that are summer wear".

"But I can see one over there," I gestured, myopically. "That," she said, "is the ladies section."

She did not tell me that I was a challenge. But she could have done. I was wearing a stuffy Tweed jacket and cavalry twills with a prolapsed turn-up.

I felt like walking out, but acquiesced to becoming dark suited. That is the way I always buy clothes, knowing that if I cannot get what I really want, the alternative is spending more time and more money shopping around. Let's get it over with. Perhaps, after all, I am the personal shoppers' dream.

Anyway, Ms Idris had some interesting tales to tell. For example, she has learned to distinguish by their suits lawyers, accountants and brokers (prominent professions among the City men who dash in at lunchtime wanting a suit for both office and "fun" as she calls it). Lawyers wear three-piece pinstriped suits, accountants like navy blue and brokers like grey with a bit of green.

Also, she said, while women shop in flocks, and swap opinions, men tend to shop alone. "They really need someone to help them in a professional way." I was beginning to feel I had found a friend.

But the £160 "new grey" suit with a bit of green that she offered me, I loathed - even though she said I could wear it with a T-shirt on Friday afternoons before going off for some "fun". I loathe T-shirts, too. Clearly, I am not cut out to be a broker, even a fun-loving one.

Then Ms Idris got to work on my colouring - part of the in-house training she got from the American image consultants Color Me Beautiful. She glanced at my grey hair. "Were you once fairer?" she asked. "No," I said, "my hair used to be jet-black".

An Italian navy-blue suit (£275) made me look young. Not my image at all. But the colour appealed and I liked the light weight.

We ended up with a navy-ish double-breasted M&S suit at £130. "T-shirts won't go with double-breasted," she said. Thank God for that.

Her stroke of genius was in the accessories. She produced a range of pink, sky blue and yellow shirts - apparently, bright shirts are in this year - and a couple of ties, one electric blue, one navy blue with orange and yellow dots. I was captivated by the bright yellow shirt (£27), which I would never have had the nerve to match with a dark suit, and by the electric blue tie.

Hmm. Electric blue, she said, would go with a pink or sky blue shirt but not with a yellow one. I should choose the darker tie (£18). With the help of a mirror, I did.

The session lasted 50 minutes - quite enough time to spend shopping for clothes in one year. I walked out with the shirt and tie and I will probably return to buy the dark suit when mine wears out. But what I really wanted was the sort of linen jacket that my grandfather used to wear on the bowling green.

John Windsor

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A lost cause? Windsor is checked out



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By wearing a djellaba, was Charles starting a trend, or just covering his ears? Siobhan O'Sullivan reveals all

The Prince's new clothes

Charles won't be starting a fashion trend in djellaba wearing, just because he greeted guests at Highgrove wearing one. But whether he was altogether serious about his latest venture into Eastern exoticism he's surprisingly stylish.

The revival in all things ethnic goes on apace. Design force, Red or Dead, showed flowing robes for men on their Spring/Summer catwalk. It's a movement away from the tight lycra-laden sports-wear that has dominated men's fashion since the late 1980s.

Red or Dead's Wayne Hemmingsway feels that menswear is moving towards looser shapes and more fluid fabrics. As for the style motives behind the Prince's new look, he said: "As far as I understand it, the Prince wasn't wearing the djellaba to be trendy but because of his interest in the multiplicity of religion and cultures. His free thinking ideas on culture and religion are very similar to the messages of Britain's youth. England being an exciting and cultural melting pot, with comparatively high levels of racial tolerance, and that is what we have attempted to put across in our catwalk show."

It's one thing to see men in robes on the catwalk but now that the collection is in the shops, are men buying and wearing it?

"The odd super trendy will buy the robes and wear them as seen on the catwalk but what we find sells in volume are the open-neck shirts and more embroidered details and the loose fluid shorts worn with the open-toe sandals. The catwalk portrayal is intended to convey a new spirit, the ethnic influence is very important and it will continue to grow in popularity over the next couple of years."

John Morgan, associate editor of *GG* magazine, feels that although the Eastern influ-

ence is just one of many in today's menswear fashion, it is not necessarily an overriding one. "I think there's a very strong sartorial semiotic in the Prince wearing these things, although he professes to be Anglican and head of the Church of England, he is showing us all that he feels much is to be learnt from other religions." But will the trend take off? "I think it'll be quite a long time before the djellaba becomes everyday wear."

Spencers, noted: "Womenswear is always ahead of the game in terms of design trends. I think the Eastern influence is a long-term trend. It certainly isn't a major trend for us yet. I wouldn't say that what Prince Charles was wearing sounds like something Marks & Spencers would be stocking in the near future!"

Nick Sullivan, the associate editor of the menswear magazine *Arena*, thinks that it is not a trend that is particularly influential. "Many designers actually have homes in Morocco and, possibly as a result, the Moorish styles do tend to come and go on the catwalks, but putting men in skirts is more of a device to gain column inches. Few designers expect the public to embrace the look literally."

The award-winning menswear designer John Rocha feels strongly drawn towards Eastern influences. "I originate from Hong Kong so the resurgence of an ethnic influence in fashion is very exciting and something I understand. This is reflected in my Autumn/Winter collection which explores the idea of a bohemian Irishman travelling the East through fabric, colour and texture. I've used brocade silk and rich colours of the Orient. It is always very important to be aware of other cultures as it can be a great source of inspiration."

So, do the designers think that Charles is cutting edge? John Rocha: "Although Prince Charles is not known as a trend-setter, wearing the djellaba socially proved he has a sense of style and a certain flair." Wayne Hemmingsway was full of approval. "I think the Prince is quite modern. It's great he feels confident to wear a djellaba. Any criticism he may get is very short sighted. Besides, the hood is very useful to hide protruding ears!"



Exotic detail: from Red or Dead

Strong Asian influences crop up regularly in fashion for both men and women. Shellagh Brown, head of womenswear design at Marks & Spencers, commented: "We've certainly noticed a trend towards Eastern influences in fashion but they have been more far Eastern in flavour than from the Middle East. At Marks & Spencers we will interpret these trends more through decorative fabrics such as jacquard, silks and prints rather than in extreme silhouettes. We will be seeing mandarin collars, side slits and dresses over trousers."

Simon Davy, head of menswear design at Marks &



Far left: the rich colours of the Orient from John Rocha

Centre: Charles, joker or trend-setter?

Left: flowing robes and ethnic influences dominate the style of Red or Dead

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Gardening

Congratulations to Winners of the International Open Amateur Poetry Competition "Quiet Moments"

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John Canning / Llandudno, New Zealand
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Each month The International Library of Poetry sponsors an amateur poetry competition in the UK and Ireland and will award over £18,000 in prize money over the next 12 months. Anyone may enter the competition simply by sending in one original poem, any subject, any style, to: The International Library of Poetry, Dept. 3813, FREEPOST LON, SITTINGBOURNE, Kent ME10 3BR (no stamp required). The poem should be no more than 20 lines, and the poet's name and address must appear at the top of the page. The entry must be typed or neatly handwritten and will not be returned. All poets who enter will receive a reply, along with complete competition rules, within nine weeks.

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Under the counter with Lindsay Calder Not so heavenly scent

Where do "gifts" come from? I have got so many "fancy goods" that they have become a fancy mountain. They are stuffed at the back of kitchen drawers, or taking up valuable garment space, and making my guest bedroom smell like a close encounter with a giant peach. But, then again, my guests deserve to asphyxiate in there - they are, after all, the consummate providers of the useless gift.

The peddlers of this merchandise congregate twice a year at Earls Court 2, for the Top Drawer trade fair. There are hundreds of exhibitors, and if you manage to get to aisle two without passing out from pot-pourri poisoning, you're doing well. I used to go to spot up-and-coming jewellers, but the true craftsmen have been replaced by tartan kitchen pinboards and fake Delft things. They're all here: candles, tea tins with clocks in, scented candles, home stencilling kits, musical candles, oil burners, notebooks shaped like cats' heads, chocolate-shaped candles, golf ball cufflinks - the lot.

All visitors have a badge branding their name, stamped "UK Buyer" (even me). The serious buyers have come up to London to stock up their country gift shops - stout women in their fifties with Alice bands and Mondri blazers, who mean business, and just by grinding their fleshy knuckles in a bowl of

Christmas pot-pourri, can tell if it's quality, my dear. They favour suppliers such as Happy Flammies (animal head face flannels), The Romantic Englishwoman (lavender bags) and Woodies Ltd (scented wooden fruits - so scented, that if you had a bowl of them in your living room, and the whole England rugby team farted in there, you would never know).

After seeing enough beeswax to depilate the legs of every woman in Britain - and probably their bikini lines too - I decided enough was enough. Then, just when I was gagging from over exposure to fruity whiffs, Top Drawer revealed a secret bottom drawer containing the refreshing Ho-Ha! Clubwear. Now we're talking. Ho-Ha! Clubwear had a display of over twenty T-shirts, and I wanted them all. A navy Donna Karan T-shirt, in top quality cotton, was just what the Donna ordered for parties, and do you know what? On closer inspection the Donna Karan logo cleverly read "Donna Kebab". Excellent! Then there was the Calvin Klein one with the distinctive CK logo, but actually "CB", subtitled "Crazy Bitch". Can't see Kate Moss looking chestless in that one.

Particularly appropriate for me, after two hours on the fancy goods trail, was a Dolce & Gabbana T-shirt, but what does D&G stand for here? You've guessed it: "desperate and gagging". I have also

ordered "I'm naturally blonde, please speak slowly", but as I recently had my hair highlighted at great expense, everyone will naturally realise this is a joke.

Ho-Ha! left me with a spring in my step, but then, as I made to leave, passing another orchard of scented wooden fruits, I came upon some interesting forbidden fruits - mirrors by Fluff. You can choose between electric pink, lime green, baby blue and lemon coloured fluff, amongst others, to go round the edge of your mirror, and there is a choice of platitudes. There are 135 to select from in three categories of "not rude at all", "nearly rude" and "sort of rude". They range from "beautiful" (in various languages), "You have a beautiful smile and a great ass", "You're a kinky sexy horny babe" and "Your face needs sitting on" to the unmentionable best seller.

To any would-be guests - forget the lavender bags and the stinking wooden bananas - make your hostess's day and give her an electric-pink fluff mirror which says: "You are a divine goddess who deserves a heavenly shag!" Personally, I think they're the dog's bollocks, ("You're the dog's bollocks" mirrors also available.)

Ho-Ha! Clubwear T-shirts (from £15.50), Castor and Pol-Lux, 47 Penbridge Road, London W1 (0171-727 8358), Fluff mirrors (from £15); telephone 0181-672 0662 for stockists.

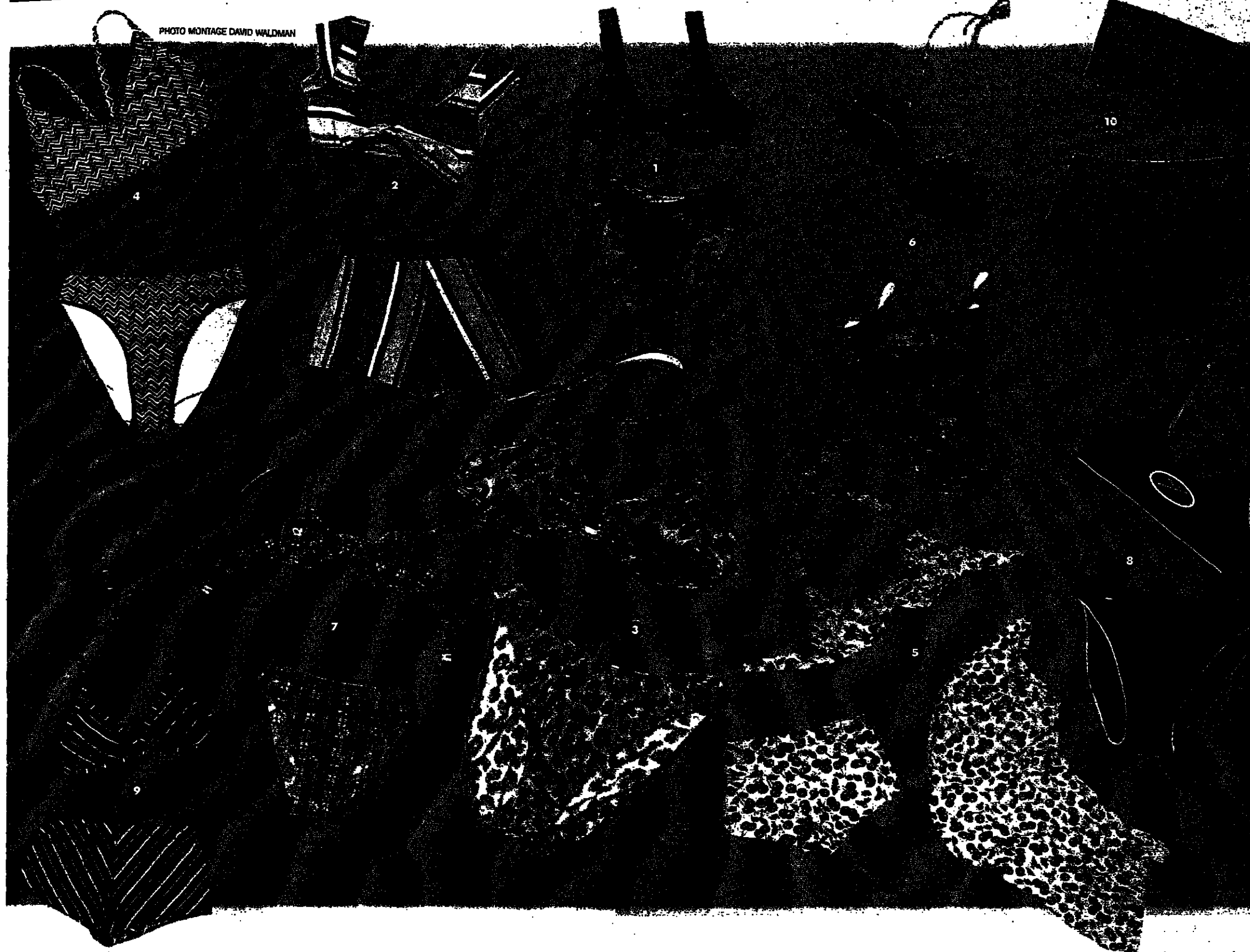


PHOTO MONTAGE DAVID WALDMAN

Bikinis for under £50

- 1 Tropical floral print underwired bikini, £22, from Freemans catalogue (ref UU 7601). For enquiries call 0800 900200.
- 2 Striped tie-front crop top and shorts bikini, £20, from Freemans catalogue (ref UP 7864), as before.
- 3 Leopard print padded halter-neck bikini, £35, by La Senza, branches nationwide. Call 0171-831 1000 for your local stockist.
- 4 Grey, purple, white and black zig-zag bikini, sold separately, top £3.99, bottoms £4.99, by Hanes, as before.
- 5 Halterneck cherry print bra, £14.99, matching bottoms, £14.99, and mini sarong skirt, £14.99 all by Knickerbox. Call 0171-284-1744 for your local stockist.
- 6 Sequin leopard print string bikini, £22, by Marks & Spencer, available from 90 stores nationwide from next week. Call 0171-935 4422 for stockists.
- 7 Lime green 'Daisy Duck' bikini, £29.99, by Speedo, available from Debenhams Stores nationwide, as before, and by mail order through Swim-shop. Call 01582 562111 for a catalogue, and enquiries.
- 8 Black and red 'Sonic' sports bikini, by Speedo, available through mail order from Swim-shop, as before.
- 9 Striped bikini top, £19.99, bottoms £29.99, by Hunters and Gatherers, available from Hype DF 48-52 Kensington High Street, London, W8.
- 10 Turquoise bandeau bikini with big knickers, £45, by No Such Soul, available from Hype DF, as before.

Photographer:
Mykel Nicolaou

Once more unto the beach



Bikini, £360, by Chanel, 26 Old Bond Street, London, W1 (0171-493 5040)



Leopard print bikini, £180, by Blumarine, 11 Old Bond Street, London W1 (0171-493 4872)

The bikini season is officially open. Glossy mags have dedicated their entire June issues to lithe models with slightly un-PC deep tans wearing the only thing to be seen in on a beach – a skimpy designer bikini. But while supermodels prance around making strange shapes with their bodies in oddly cut, expensive bikini's, normal women can only look on in bafflement, wishing they knew where to buy one that doesn't cost more than £50 (at the most), and which will fit the bill for a European beach holiday.

If you are thinking of buying a bikini, buy it now. Wait much longer and all the best styles in decent sizes will have sold out (sizes eight and 14 are always the first to go). The shops are over-flowing with them at the moment – every store from Marks & Spencer to Warehouse has done a selection that could rival any offering from a designer, and what is actually available now will satisfy everyone from Baywatch beach babes to more reclusive sun worshippers whose idea of sunbathing is a quick twenty minutes by the pool after breakfast.

If you are thinking of buying a bikini, do it now – and don't be baffled by the supermodels. Melanie Rickey Baywatches on the high-street

The safe tanning debate has spawned not only comprehensive information about how we should care for our skin in the sun but also beachwear that can protect too. At Next and Knickerbox they provide simple bikini's with bright attractive prints that have matching mini-sarong skirts (also handy if you don't wish to display your bottom to rowing eyes) and cropped t-shirts to protect sun-ravaged shoulders. The same fabrics are being used to make bikini's with

underwiring and padding, as well as in the more skimpy string variety, so if yours is a figure that needs support you have the choice.

When a woman buys a bikini there are several factors to be aware of. First is knowing what is currently in fashion. This season, bandeau tops are making a comeback (easy to roll down if you like to go topless, no straps) as are bigger knickers (they are flattering to less curvy women, and can hide a multitude of sins). String bikini's are as popular as ever. Daring sun-worshippers can choose from camouflage, shiny hologram and leopard print fabrics. If you prefer classics choose Missoni inspired stripes or basic colours like citrus orange or turquoise which is very popular this summer, but steer clear of black – the sun absorbs it.

Fabric is also an important issue. Always check the label for the fabric content of your chosen bikini. The best ones have lots of elastane or Lycra, and for a softer bikini choose one that contains Supplex as well as Lycra. Finally, when will swimwear technologists design a fabric that tells you you've had enough sun? We're waiting.



Striped big knicker bikini, £180, by Blumarine (as before)



Colour block bikini by Tommy Hilfiger (001-212 840 8888)

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Visit the exciting harbour of Zanzibar, bustling with humans and retaining reminders of its exotic 'spice island' history. The picturesque island of Mayotte, electrified by a vast lagoon, boasts spectacular and dramatic scenery. May Be is an island of great contrasts. For many the highlights will be the Seychelles – coral fringed islands, powder white beaches, peaceful in flora and fauna, exotic and beautiful.

Returning to Mombasa from the Seychelles by air you'll spend another two nights of this fabulous holiday back at the Flamingo Beach Hotel before your return day time flight to the UK via Rome.

The holiday price includes:

- Return economy flights between UK and Mombasa via Rome.
- 4 nights full board accommodation at the Flamingo Beach Hotel and 1 night on Safari.
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For a full brochure please contact: The Independent Indian Ocean Cruise, 11 Old Bond Street, London W1 (0171-493 4872)

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AD WATCH

From grey suits to space-suits at Norwich Union

It is most advertising agencies' worst nightmare: how to create a sexy financial services campaign? Consumers just aren't interested, you see. The products are complicated and the advertising typically dull and dry. Step forward and take a bow, then, Norwich Union which has bravely recruited a comedy chef and an elusive lobster to star in its latest TV campaign.

"Seriously distracting" is the theme, with each ad depicting situations in which protagonists are "seriously distracted" by the prospects of Norwich Union's flotation. That's where the lobster comes in – he escapes from the chef's kitchen and is last seen reading a newspaper on a train. Labour? Maybe. Comedy? Perhaps. But it's an approach which is little short of revolutionary in the grey-suited world of financial services.

"If you're unable to say something concrete – which is the case with many financial ads – creating interesting and effective advertising becomes far harder," says Marilyn Baxter, vice chairman of the agency behind the campaign, Saatchi and Saatchi. It's all very well saying "cheaper", "faster" or "washes whiter" for other products, but the true value of a pension won't become evident for many years. Then there's the nature of the beast – the more complex the product, the tougher it is to explain.



Seriously distracting: one giant leap for the financial services

The challenge was to advertise something financial, but broadcast regulations dictate that cannot be directly advertised, she adds. The Financial Services Act prevents anyone from urging consumers to buy shares because they are a good investment. It also requires ads to carry unwieldy disclaimers, including the now familiar health warning: "The value of shares/investments can go up as well as down".

The campaign, targeting NU's two million UK members, had to be a call to action – but stick within the letter of the law. And it had to stand out from the glut of recent building society demutualisations.

Building society flotations tend to involve free shares being offered to

shareholders. The demutualisation of NU, however, is slightly different, says Thomas Cowper-Johnson, Norwich Union's head of brand and international communications.

"Not only is NU offering shares but it also hopes to raise new money from members offered the chance to buy more shares at a discount," he explains. To work within the spirit of the Financial Services Act advertising and broadcast legislation, the campaign had to focus on creating awareness of the opportunity to buy. "Much financial services advertising is dull as dishwater," Mr Cowper-Johnson believes. Humour is an effective way of breaking through this – even if used in moderation (NU was looking to raise a

smile rather than a "belly laugh", he explains). That the end result retained even the merest hint of humour is little short of a miracle, given the army of advisors and censors who vetted the process. "The campaign had to meet the approval of not only the agency creative director and client but, more specifically, NU's financial director, its merchant banker, lawyers, stock brokers, city PR firm and all the interested regulatory authorities," Ms Baxter says.

Read the reams of literature associated with NU's imminent demutualisation and you too will probably find yourself failing to catch your partner on the trapeze, missing your rocket home from outer space or boiling your lobster live – as happens in each of the ads. But the really neat touch is the campaign's tightness of tone.

It is a lesson already learned by the likes of Allied Dunbar, who's all singing and dancing "There might be trouble ahead" campaign continues to engage and entertain.

But sit up at the back, Equitable Life and Scottish Widows. The former continues to rely on the agonising father and son combo in the "It's an equitable life, Henry" ads. And the latter? You've guessed it... Scottish women dressed in black.

Meg Carter

صدا من الاصل

ROAD TEST
Daihatsu Move

By John Simister

What, you may well ask, is the point? Here's a new breed of car – a tall box on wheels – with Brains (the intellectual power behind *Thunderbirds*, remember?) as its advertising-boarder protagonist, and a tendency to make people fall over in disbelief in its television commercial. The Daihatsu Move is quite startling and clearly very small if it is designed to appeal to Brains who, if memory serves correct, is about 3ft tall excluding his strings. But what is it for?

The Move is a miniature multi-purpose vehicle, or MPV, which is to say it's a shrunken interpretation of the Galaxy and Espace idea. Being shrunken, it has only four seats, which immediately limits the number of its potential purposes. But all four seats can be slid individually fore-and-aft, reclined to make a bed of sorts, or folded flat for when you want your Move to move something other than people. There are five doors, the rear most one side-hinged, and with huge headroom and deep windows the Move achieves the apparent paradox of being a very small car with an airy, spacious interior.

Right, so it won't carry an Espace-load of people. But it is a useful little device, being only a foot or so longer than a Mini and very narrow – it's a foot narrower than it is tall. Which makes it a very handy way of carrying awkward loads through crowded city streets, and for parking. And while there is not much luggage space behind the rear seats when you're travelling four-up, if you're a crowd of three you can let the load space encroach into the vacant chair's territory. You can do this in an average hatchback, too, of course, but it seems less of an invasion in the open-plan Move.

The big shrink



DAIHATSU MOVE

Specifications
Price: (on the road) £7,200 (Move), £8,200 (Move+)
Engine: 847cc, three cylinders, 12 valves, 42bhp at 5,300rpm; five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive.
Performance: top speed 82mph, 0-60 not stated.
Fuel consumption: 42-47mpg

Rivals
Several similar cars are on offer in Japan, but for UK buyers the Move is a unique proposition. However, for the price of a Move you could buy a conventional supermini such as a Volkswagen Polo, or you could find a comparably compact dimensions and engine size in the cheaper Fiat Cinquecento. Alternatively, you could spend more and have less with a Mini (£8,995), but there's little point.

The Move was Japan's best-selling car at the end of last year, and has triggered an influx of imitators, the latest of which is the Honda Life (Move, Life – the Japanese have a knack of getting right to the core of a product's purpose, although Mitsubishi's contribution, the Minica Toppo, doesn't quite strike the chord). But we in Britain might be embarrassed more easily. And there's the other crucial question. What is it like to drive? Is it truly dreadful?

Not at all. The way the Move lollaps along is rather fun. The tall build makes for a poly-poly cornering, but the little wheels hang on to the road gamely, and the Daihatsu flattens bumps surprisingly successfully for something tiny, lightweight and van-shaped. The little 847cc engine – that's one cubic centimetre smaller than the original Mini's motor – spins smoothly, humming away enthusiastically with its deep, three-cylinder

tone, and provided you make plentiful use of the long, wand-like gear lever, the Move moves along with a surprising frisk. Subjectively speaking, anyway.

The interior is plasticity and basic, and the upright driving position does your right ankle in after a time. However, if you're prepared to spend more than the £7,200 that is the Move's on-the-road price, you can have a Move+ which has electric windows, central locking, a rev-

counter and a Pioneer stereo with baffling controls. There are fancier paint schemes, colour-matched bumpers and a more plush interior trim, too, all of which costs you an extra £1,000. Automatic transmission is optional; so is air conditioning whose pump does not, contrary to expectations, cause the tiny engine to groan to a halt when the air is being conditioned.

Strange as it may seem, the Move does

make a case for itself. Actually, it's rather charming; were it cheaper, there would be something Citroën 2CV-like about its station in life. In Japan, though, you can get a 659cc, four-cylinder, 16-valve, turbocharged version with 58bhp instead of our model's 42, and a demeanour resembling a Yorkshire terrier on amphetamines. I drove one in London, brought over by the UK importer for appraisal, and people kept bursting out laughing because they couldn't believe that something so small and so square could move so fast and be named so aptly. It won't be said here, sad to say. We'll just have to make do with the relatively sane version instead.

Ageing gracefully

By James Ruppert

When you buy a brand new car, the simple act of driving it out of the showroom can cost about £3,000. Depreciation is a black hole into which your car's actual value rapidly disappears. Any model which can retain anything like 50 per cent of its new value in three years' time and after covering about 40,000 miles is doing very well indeed.

At the very worst, some Ladas struggle to retain 26 per cent of their admittedly low values. At best, certain marques such as Ferrari, Porsche and Mercedes seem to depreciate relatively slowly, possibly losing no more than a third of their value. Depreciation figures are not simply plucked out of thin air, they are based on demand, availability, running costs and image. So which models in each sector fight depreciation the best?

Small hatchbacks

Volkswagen Polo 1.0L 5dr
Cost new: £8,310. Value in three years: £4,100.
The VW badge is seen as standing for quality and reliability, both vital ingredients when it comes to retaining value. It helps of course if the car is a good one and the Polo is excellent, being both refined and spacious. Small cars are always in demand, but the Polo has an extra air of exclusivity.
Runner up: Ford Fiesta 1.25L 5dr. Cost new: £10,250. Value in three years: £4,800.

Medium hatchbacks

Honda Civic 5dr 1.6L 5dr
Cost new: £14,450. Value in three years: £6,000.
The Honda Civic is a car that demonstrates the importance of the private purchase and value of customer loyalty. Honda makes cars that are reliable, well equipped and of high quality. The company is the far Eastern equivalent of BMW and the Japanese have made few inroads into the West market. As a result, Civic owners are not disappointed when they buy a new car, and they are prepared to pay for it. Civic is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last.
Runner up: Mazda 323 1.5L 5dr. Cost new: £12,210. Value in three years: £5,400.

Family saloons

Volkswagen Passat 1.8 20v
Cost new: £14,985. Value in three years: £6,900.
This sector of the car market is by far the most competitive. Company after company demand that the cars they buy are well equipped, reliable and, above all, hugely discounted. The Passat has just lost the Mondeo and Peugeot 406 to become the instant class leader in terms of specification and performance. The fact that it is a VW means there won't be large numbers around at discounted prices, plus it has the prestige of a VW badge.
Runner up: Peugeot 406 1.8L 20v. Cost new: £14,805. Value in three years: £6,000.

Premium saloons

Mercedes-Benz C200 (E-Class)
Cost new: £22,100. Value in three years: £11,000.
The Mercedes-Benz C200 is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last.
Runner up: BMW 318tds Touring. Cost new: £18,670. Value in three years: £9,400.

Estate cars

Mercedes-Benz C200 (E-Class)
Cost new: £22,100. Value in three years: £11,000.
The Mercedes-Benz C200 is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last.
Runner up: Volkswagen Sharan 2.0L 5dr. Cost new: £23,354. Value in three years: £11,600.

Small prestige

Audi A4 1.8 SE
Cost new: £20,484. Value in three years: £10,000.
BMW has a working deal. Audi A4 is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last.
Runner up: BMW 318i SE. Cost new: £20,484. Value in three years: £10,000.

Large prestige

BMW 528iSE
Cost new: £30,460. Value in three years: £14,400.
Big luxury cars depreciate badly and the BMW 5 series is a case in point. But by choosing the 528iSE, you can enjoy the benefits of a luxury car without the depreciation. The 528iSE is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last.
Runner up: Audi A8. Cost new: £30,460. Value in three years: £14,400.

Sports

MG MGF
Cost new: £9,995. Value in three years: £4,000.
MG MGF is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last. It is a car that is built to last and is a car that is built to last.
Runner up: Lotus Elise. Cost new: £9,995. Value in three years: £4,000.

SUVs

Land Rover Discovery V8i
Cost new: £24,330. Value in three years: £11,500.
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Runner up: Volvo XC90. Cost new: £24,330. Value in three years: £11,500.

People carriers

Seat Alhambra 2.0
Cost new: £17,255. Value in three years: £7,700.
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Runner up: Volkswagen Sharan 2.0L 5dr. Cost new: £23,354. Value in three years: £11,600.



Gavin Green

Mainstream makers have upped the level of driver appeal, just as gridlock sets in

Thirty years or so ago, sports cars went fast and handled well, looked sexy and broke down a lot – unless they were MGs, in which case they went slowly, handled badly, looked sexy and broke down a lot. They also leaked when it rained.

In a similar vein, family cars were big and roomy and extremely dull to drive. Compare a popular family saloon of the era – say, an Austin 1800 or a Ford Cortina – with a popular sports car of the day (the E-type Jag) and it's easy to see that, apart from four wheels and an alarming propensity to rust, the cars had little in common. For starters, the E-type went twice as fast. Sports cars did one job, family cars did another. Things aren't so clear-cut now, as recent drives in some of the best-selling family saloons have shown.

Excitement sells, so does "image", and, as an upshot, many family cars nowadays not only lug kids around, but also get the juices flowing. Many family cars will do over 120mph, accelerate as fast as a hot hatch, and some even look great (although progress has been a little slower on this front).

The first big surprise in store was the V6 Vauxhall Vectra. Despite being launched on a "car for the new millennium" platform, the Vectra is well known for serving up about as much fizz as a week-old glass of lemonade. But recent mods, aimed at overturning its sensible-shoes image, have substantially improved it. It now handles and steers better than any E-type ever did and has a honey of a V6 engine, which gives the one-time dullard more performance than most 30-year-old sports cars. Pity it

still looks so nondescript, at odds with recent good design work that Vauxhall has done (Corsa, Tigra).

Less of a surprise was the new Ford Mondeo. Unlike the Vectra, the Mondeo was more or less right first time. The new Mondeo is even better. The V6 version is the real sports car in drag: like the Vectra V6, it's not only quick enough to humble most old sports cars, but it can sprint past quite a few new ones as well. To boot, the latest Mondeo has beautifully direct steering and handles in a fluent and dignified manner.

It may be the spiritual successor to the old Cortina of the Sixties and Seventies in terms of market segment, but in most other ways the Mondeo is more of a BMW than a traditional family Ford. Even in four-cylinder guise, the engine, once such an old slinger, revs sweetly. It now sounds and feels like a collection of components in harmony rather than a mish-mash of mechanicals at war.

Last week, I had another go in what is probably the best family saloon, the new Volkswagen Passat. This time it was a turbodiesel model, so there was little chance of sprightly sports-car-busting performance. But what there was, in abundance, was fine handling and steering, and a real feeling of driver/machine

interaction. There was also a plethora of clever design: the new Passat looks better than most sports cars on the road, a masterpiece of refined understatement, like a good suit. Its nearest rival for best car in class, the Peugeot 406, looks even better.

Back in the Sixties, dull-looking big-selling family cars just waited (Austin 1800s) or jolted (Cortinas, all Vauxhalls) on their ways. In either case, they were objects of transport rather than instruments of pleasure. They were about as much fun to use as a fridge.

Since then, learning a lesson from prestige makers like BMW, all mainstream family cars have upped the level of driver appeal (as well as comfort, refinement and just about every other tangible, including rising cost of ownership). Some makers certainly do it better than others, but all have improved.

The irony is that, as cars get better to drive, go faster and handle more sweetly, so roads have become more clogged. Which means there are fewer places to enjoy them. Maybe the crafty car makers, mindful of gradually rising traffic levels, planned this all along! After all, if we had to endure hour-long traffic queues in a car as uninspiring to use as an old Cortina, we'd all go by train.

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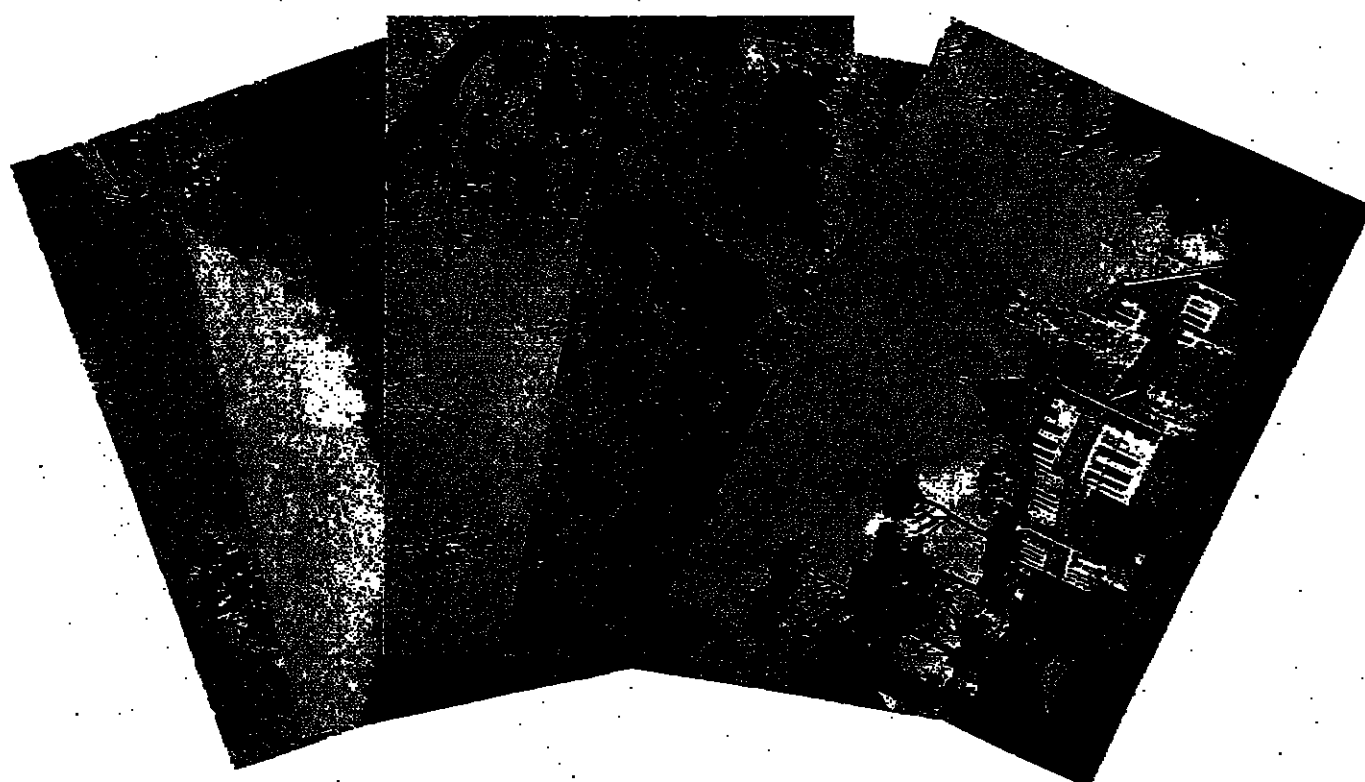
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homes & money

Down to a photo finish

Penny Jackson picks between the pixels of the property brochures



The house looked perfect. It was on a wooded hillside, with gardens that led down to the river. There was even a boathouse on the water's edge. It was an idyllic spot that required an immediate visit. For Margie Coldrey, who could see no obvious hitch from the estate agent's details, the property seemed to represent everything she and her husband had been looking for in the West country.

They made the journey, with mounting anticipation, to the spot on the River Dart. The house was as good as it looked in the brochure but to their enormous disappointment the land they had assumed was the garden, far from descending in a riot to the river, was not even part of the property.

"All there was in front of the house was a gravel driveway with a parking space. The garden turned out to be at the back," says Mrs Coldrey, taking up the story. "The picture had been taken from the

other side of the river, because of the slope and the trees you could not see the driveway or the road that ran alongside the house. It looked as though that land ran down to the water. We didn't even bother to go and look at the house."

She felt irritated with herself. As public relations consultant to John D Wood, she is familiar with brochures. "In our enthusiasm at seeing such a lovely property, we failed to read the map properly. If we had studied it and checked the measurements it would have been clear that the garden couldn't have gone down to the water. We knew some other people who made a special trip down from London to see the same house. They were so sure of what the picture showed that they also failed to seek clarification from the agents."

This sort of scenario comes as no surprise to Charlie Ellingworth of Property Vision, a buying agency he started "because agents' details tell only a tenth of the story. One of the first houses I went to see was a very pretty Georgian

house with a background of trees. When I got there I found the M40 flyover went within 20 yards of the top window. Buckets of times I find something bang next door to a house which is not shown in the photograph. Brochures are powerful tools that by definition make everything look like paradise. That's their job. The hope is that people turn up and like a house despite its drawbacks."

There is, however, a great deal of difference between having a garden overlooked by neighbours, and finding that the country cottage you have driven 50 miles to see is plonked next to a pig farm or is on a road with lorries thundering past every few minutes. Unless you employ someone like Mr Ellingworth, most of us rely on the selling agent.

It is reassuring that the leading agencies do inform buyers of obvious blight. Edward Sugden of John D Wood's Oxford office believes not disclosing a planning application or informing a potential buyer that a house is on a major

road junction wastes everyone's time and causes bad feeling.

In London, noise factor is crucial. Jonathan Hewlett of Savills finds the Underground can be a sore point. "Technically we don't have to mention it in our details, but we do where it affects the house - although this upsets the vendor sometimes."

Vendors are also the only people who are sometimes disappointed by the constraints of the Property Misdescription Act 1991. While it outlawed such practices as using a view from a penthouse to sell a first-floor flat or airbrushing out an unsightly building, it also saw off extravagant and vague descriptions. Instead of adjectives, we now have facts, floor plans and maps and, above all, photographs.

Those selling are mostly persuaded of a brochure's pulling power and will spend anything from £200 to several thousand pounds for a professional job. Where appropriate, an extra £500 on aerial shots can show at a glance that a house

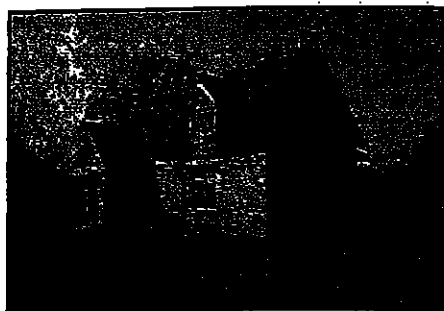
really is secluded and close to the water and more than repays the expenditure.

Vicki Naish, who is involved in brochure design for Savills, says that in choosing the best photographs she has to be sure that they are not misleading. "But like any advertising, we want to show the property in the best possible light. It's often a matter of emphasis - a garden may be more spectacular than the house, or an interior shot may be a better selling point than the outside."

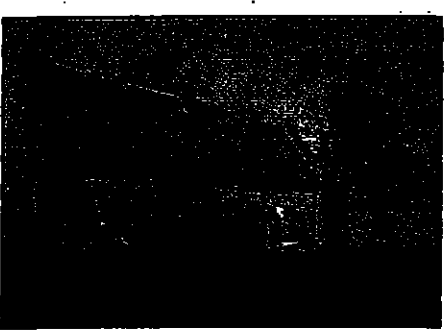
Buyers, then, should learn to read into the absence of certain pictures. It is perfectly natural for owners to want only the best features of a property to be shown.

Not that they are always the best judges. Edward Hill, an architectural photographer, is surprised at how many people have no idea which direction their houses face. "I might photograph a house in the morning because it faces east yet the owner insists that the sun hits it in the afternoon. You have to be very diplomatic sometimes."

Three on view Grade II-listed cottages



North Lodge at Bramshott, near Liphook, Hampshire, is surrounded by fields and adjoining National Trust woodland. The two-bedroom cottage has mellow stone elevations with some stone mullion windows. Dating back to 1827, it has recently been modernised and has the potential to be enlarged. The sitting room has a deep open fireplace with an exposed beamed ceiling. In the dining room, an Aga is set into the chimney breast which adjoins the original bread oven. The bathroom is downstairs. The cottage, in a bit less than two acres of grounds, is three miles from Liphook on the main line to Waterloo and Portsmouth. It is for sale through Lane Fox (01438 661077) at a guide price of £250,000.



The Brew House in Yelverton, Norfolk, has been converted from a predominantly 17th-century monastic building. It was believed to have been the brewery for the monks of Yelverton Hall, a staging post for pilgrims on their way to Walsingham. It is constructed of mellow red brick under a pantile roof with crow gable ends. The house has four bedrooms and two bathrooms. Downstairs it has a drawing room, dining room and kitchen/breakfast room. The garden is about 0.31 acres. Yelverton is a small village, five miles south of Norwich. The house is for sale with Savills Norwich (01603 612211), at an asking price of £185,000.



Steps Cottage is situated near the centre of the Cotswold village of Bibury - described by William Morris as "the most beautiful village in England". The cottage is set back from the main street and is approached up a short flight of steps. It has three bedrooms, one bathroom and a breakfast room/kitchen. The sitting room has a large inglenook fireplace. There is a split-level screened garden in the front which is well screened. Parking is within 100 metres of the cottage. Offers in the region of £124,500 (Lane Fox: 01285 653101).

Penny Jackson

How borrowers can make the best of the 'rest'

Nic Cicutti finds a discrepancy in repayment mortgages that can cost you thousands

There are repayment mortgages - and there are repayment mortgages. The difference between them can mean up to five years longer to settle the loan and thousands of pounds more in interest payments. How? Well, it all depends on how you calculate the amount you pay back each month.

The issue has acquired greater significance given the gradual return to popularity of repayment mortgages. In essence, there are two main ways of meeting the cost of a loan. Most people still choose endowment mortgages, which involve interest-only monthly repayments on the loan. The capital itself is paid off by other means, usually through an endowment policy but also PEPs and the tax-free lump sum element of personal pensions. The shine of endowments has become tarnished by the realisation that they are highly inflexible and require long-term commitments. And warnings from endowment providers that they can no longer guarantee their policies will actually pay off the loan at maturity has led to a switch to repayment loans.

However, the manner in which the repayment is calculated is crucial. Typically, mortgage lenders will only calculate the amount of capital to be repaid at the end of a 12-month cycle, no matter how much has been repaid in the intervening period. This is known

within the mortgage industry as the "annual rest" period. In effect, it means that borrowers are themselves lending money to their lenders throughout the year - except that their loans are interest-free.

The alternative is to credit part of the

amount paid against the capital owed, as soon as it comes in, either monthly ("monthly rest") or daily ("daily rest"). A report last week by Yorkshire Bank, one of a handful of lenders that operates in that way, suggests that on an average £51,000 loan, borrowers can end up over-paying £13,000 or more if interest rates stay at 7.24 per cent. A borrower would take 21 years to pay off a same-sized loan if "daily rests" are applied instead of 25 years for "annual rests".

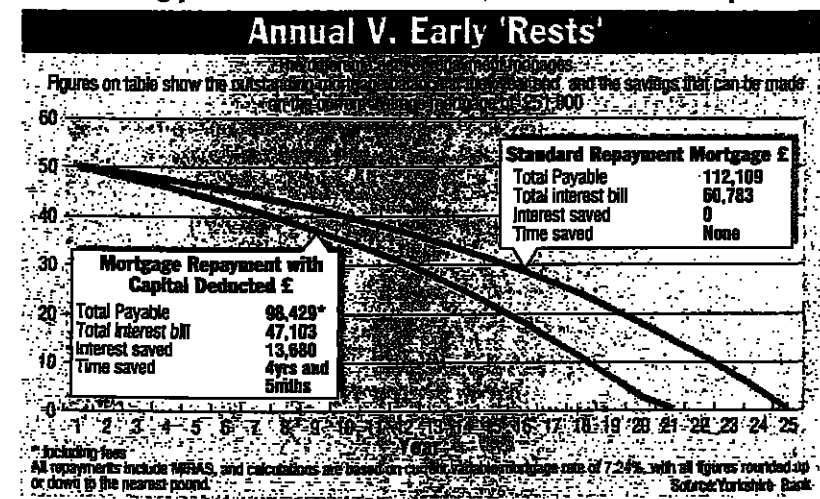
Despite the massive difference between the two methods of calculating how much is repaid on the loan, the vast majority of lenders refuse to switch to the one that is beneficial to borrowers. They argue that borrowers are always made fully aware of the methods lenders use when calculating repayments. Yet a survey by Harris Research for Yorkshire Bank suggests that a third of people have no idea when their mortgages will be fully paid off, and more than 50 per cent have no idea what their exact repayments are or how they are calculated.

Lenders who operate "annual rests"

claim that a daily system would not help those in arrears, against whom interest would begin to build immediately if they failed to pay off their loans. Yet the vast majority of people are never in arrears and many of those who are will only be in that position for a few months. The benefits of daily interest credits far outweigh the potential penalties.

The lesson for borrowers is clear. If you are considering a repayment mortgage, look for a company that credits your payments daily or monthly. If you already have a variable-rate repayment mortgage, with no penalties for switching, do so right away. It could cut the cost of your loan by thousands of pounds. It would also give a kick in the teeth to the vast majority of lenders who abuse the public's trust in this way.

Lenders calculating mortgage interest on a daily basis: Birmingham Midshires, Britannia, Midland Bank, NatWest Mortgage Services, Portman, Royal Bank of Scotland, Woolwich, Yorkshire Bank, Yorkshire Building Society, TSB, Direct Line (Source MoneyFacts)



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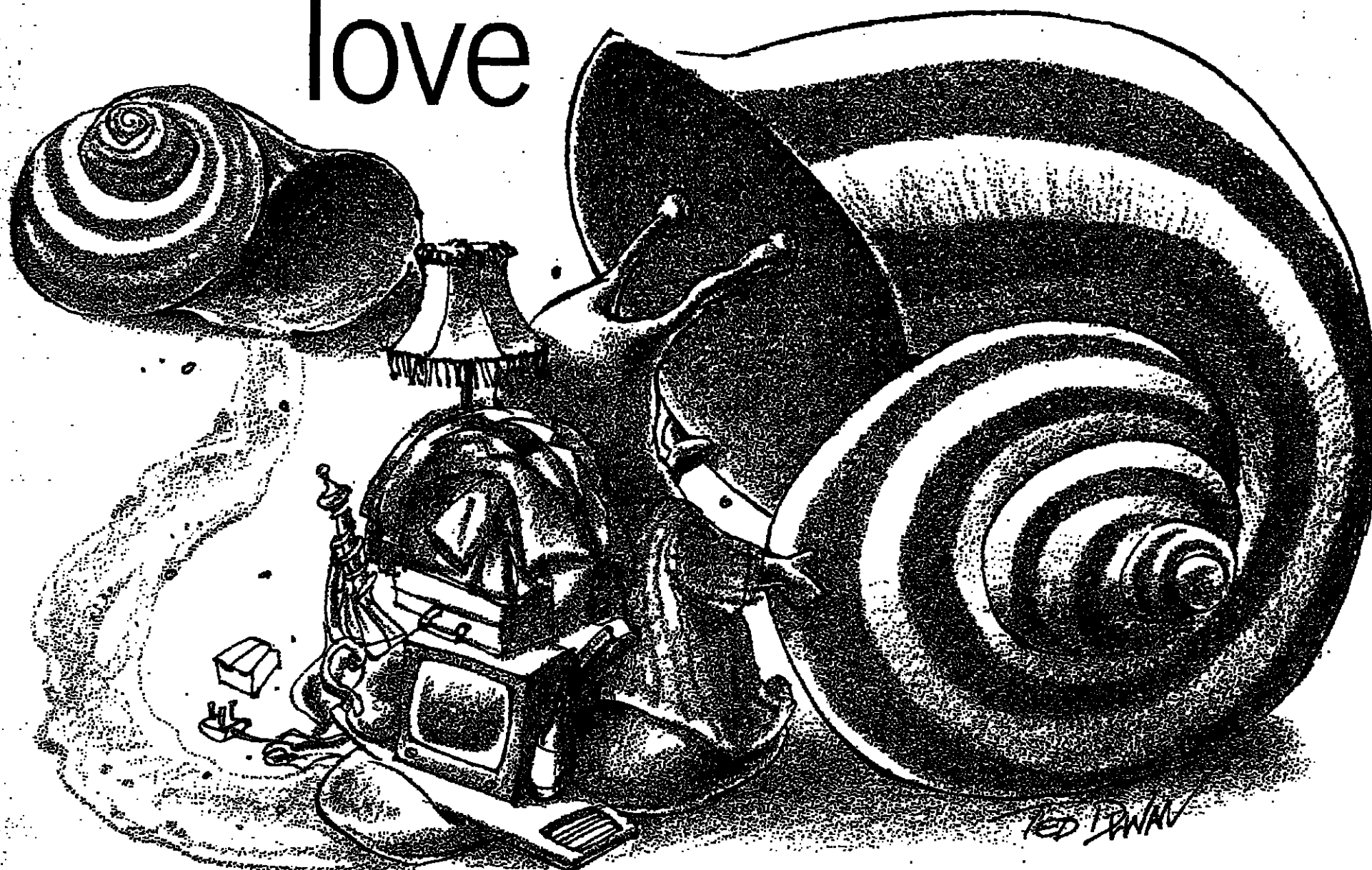
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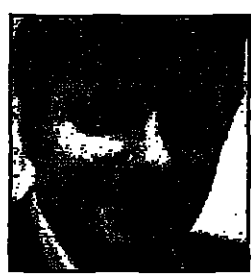
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Inflation could still spoil the party

Some more reflections this week on the topical issues of Labour, inflation and the state of the markets, prompted by the timely publication of PDFM's annual survey of the investment climate. PDFM is one of the Big Four firms that dominate UK pension fund management, and its Pension Fund Indicators is an authoritative guide to the long-term trends in such things as rates of return, where the big institutions are putting their money and so on.

While it does not use such lurid terms, a good sub-text for this year's offering might in fact be "Why Investors Have Never Had It So Good". Last year pension funds achieved an average return of around 11 per cent on their assets, bringing their total assets to £566bn. Over the past 34 years, the rate of return for UK pension funds has averaged a remarkably consistent 12 per cent per annum. Helped by the big growth in occupational schemes, the value of their assets has risen 125-fold since 1962, and tenfold after allowing for inflation.

The last decade has been a spectacularly good one as inflation has fallen and asset prices, including



Jonathan Davis

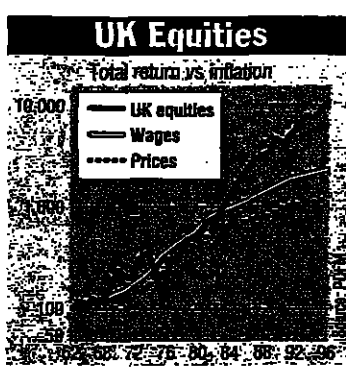
Investors have never had it so good. But medium-term price pressures are rising

shares and gilts, have soared in real terms. The compound annual rate of return achieved by pension funds in the last 10 years has been 8 per cent per annum after inflation, roughly double the long-term average, and comfortably ahead of the growth in both earnings and retail prices.

With three-quarters of all pension fund assets invested in shares, no other country has such a high equity content in its pension fund portfolios. This heavy equity weighting has paid off handsomely in the long bull market of the 1980s and early 1990s. The obvious question now is whether such returns can be sustained, and whether this overwhelming reliance

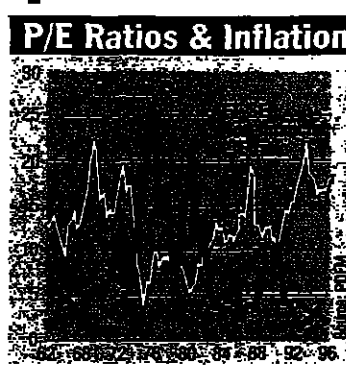
on shares continues to be justified.

Fund managers themselves seem to be starting to have some second thoughts on this matter. Although the biggest trend of the last 15 years has been the big increase in overseas equity holdings (which have doubled to 23 per cent of fund assets since 1982), between 70 per cent and 100 per cent of all net new investment by pension funds in the past four years has gone into cash and index-linked gilts, rather than into stock markets. Such caution has been quite costly in the short term, since it means that many funds have largely missed out on the latter stages of the great Wall Street boom of the last two years.



But on a longer-term perspective, it looks more understandable, given the demanding levels at which both the UK and US stock markets are now valued.

As the PDFM data shows, dividend yields have fallen sharply on both sides of the Atlantic: to levels not seen (apart, briefly, from just before the 1987 crash) since the 1968-1972 bull market. The same goes for price/earnings ratios. The current UK market p/e, about 18 times company earnings, is a little down from its peak of 23 in 1994, but the average p/e ratio of the past four years is still much higher than at any time in the previous 20 years (the



summer of 1987 again being the one brief exception).

It is, as I suggested a few weeks ago, perfectly possible to try and justify the current high valuations in terms of the improved outlook for inflation. It is evident that the 1970s and early 1980s were exceptional for their inflationary horrors. But, as PDFM correctly points out, the relationship between equity prices and the level of inflation is not as straightforward as some people claim it to be. In particular, a lot depends on what time frame you are looking at.

Thus, while in the long run, equities do clearly exhibit a tendency to provide positive real returns and

thereby act as a hedge against inflation, in the short term the effect is usually the other way round. As my [second] chart suggests, the market tends to react negatively to inflation increases. What happens in particular is that the rating of shares deteriorates.

In other words, when inflation is rising, p/e ratios tend to fall, and vice versa. PDFM compared the returns on shares, gilts and cash for years of low, medium and high inflation. This showed quite clearly that equities produced the best annual rates of return in years when inflation has been low and the worst in years when inflation has been high.

This is perfectly logical. Although big companies can usually raise their prices and report increased profits in a high inflation environment, their real rates of return on capital usually fall, justifying a lower rating. At the same time, rising inflation almost invariably brings higher interest rates with it, which helps to make interest-bearing alternatives to shares (such as deposit accounts and Treasury bills) look more attractive.

So where does all this leave us? Well, everything comes back, as I suggested just before the election, to

what happens to the inflation outlook and the time frame over which you are looking to draw a conclusion. If investors become convinced that inflation has been tamed, as Roger Bootle suggests, then equity investors need have few fears. If you share the concerns of the Bank of England and others that medium-term inflationary pressures are rising, however, then the current level of the markets has to be a worry - especially if you are primarily interested in short-term performance.

PDFM concludes that rates of return for investors must start to come down before long. So far this decade returns on both shares (12.6 per cent) and gilts (11.8 per cent) have comfortably exceeded those of the 1960s, the last time inflation was at a comparable and stable level.

Over time, the returns must come back into line, though nothing in history says when that may be. After all, PDFM said the same thing this time last year - and it didn't happen in 1996. Gordon Brown can do his bit however if he is so minded: PDFM reckons that cutting the ACT credit on dividends will cut pension funds' annual rate of return by 0.75 per cent per annum.

Who can I complain to?

Retirement: In the latest in a series explaining the Pensions Act, Stephanie Hawthorne examines the routes that can be taken to resolve problems and disputes

You may whinge, moan, wail - all to no avail. Once upon a time, aggrieved pension scheme members could formally do little more than complain if they felt there was anything amiss with the running of their fund. The only other option was to go through the courts, a prohibitively expensive procedure.

Much has improved since then. Now there is a range of choices: the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS), the Pensions Ombudsman and, from April 1997, internal dispute resolution procedures within the schemes themselves.

Resolving a problem internally is the initial option. As Malcolm McLean, chief executive of OPAS, explains: "The first port of call for any complaint or request for clarification on a pensions matter should be with the pension scheme itself."



The Pensions Act 1995 requires occupational scheme trustees to have internal dispute procedures for dealing with members' complaints. Trustees must nominate a person (usually the pensions manager)

who is responsible for making the initial decisions. These must be made in writing and state that the member has a right to appeal.

Hugh Arthur of Biddle & Co points out: "People with this responsibility must be very careful indeed about the way in which they frame their decision. Amateur rugby referees can now be sued for negligence in the whistle-blowing area: what hope, therefore the negligent professional pensions 'expert'?"

Virtually anybody with a connection to the scheme can make a complaint including active, deferred or pensioner members: a widow, widower or surviving dependants of a member; and potential members. The scheme cannot be used if the matter is already before the courts or an industrial tribunal or if the Pensions Ombudsman is investigating the case.

The Pensions Ombudsman normally allows complaints up to three years from

the date of the event giving rise to the cause of the action. If the case is brought before the court, the limit is normally six years. But there are no time limits for bringing a claim under the internal dispute resolution procedure.

Members with a grievance have only six months from the date of the initial decision to appeal to the trustees. When the trustees give their decisions, they must also tell the member that he or she can invoke the assistance of OPAS and the Pensions Ombudsman.

OPAS is a voluntary organisation which gives advice to people with pension problems. A common difficulty is that because of job changes, people may have money in pension schemes they have lost touch with. The Pension Schemes Registry will help them trace their whereabouts.

For those with a problem with the selling or marketing of personal pension plans, the organisation to turn to for

Pushing for improvements: Pensioners who want to make a complaint should start by going through the scheme's internal disputes procedure

advice will usually be the Personal Investment Authority (PIA). If you are locked in a dispute with your occupational pension scheme, the Pensions Ombudsman can step in to adjudicate.

As the final safety net, should the worse happen, you may be able to turn to the Pensions Compensation Board. It can step in where money is removed dishonestly from an occupational scheme and your employer is insolvent. In most cases it will be the trustees who will make a claim but any scheme member can do so. All claims must be in writing addressed to the Pensions Compensation Board.

The amount payable will 90 per cent of the loss or the amount needed to restore the scheme to 90 per cent funding. The board can award emergency compensation if pensioners' benefits or guaranteed minimum pensions are at risk. It will need to satisfy itself that there are reasonable grounds for believing the funds have been dishonestly removed.

OPAS, 11 Belgrave Road, London, SW1V 1RB (0171 233 8050); The Pension Schemes Registry, PO Box 111N, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 1NN (0191 225 6396); The Pensions Ombudsman, 11 Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB (0171 834 9144); Pensions Compensation Board, 11 Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB (0171 828 9794) Personal Investment Authority (PIA), 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AZ (01715388 8860)

Stephanie Hawthorne is editor of Pensions World

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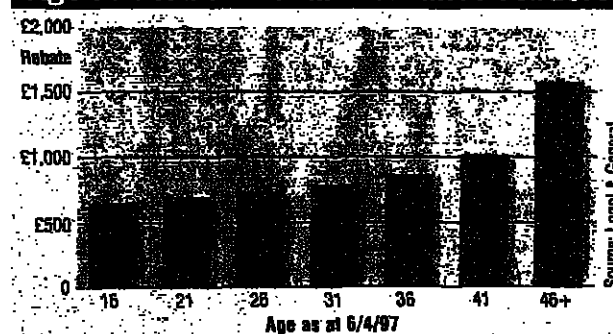
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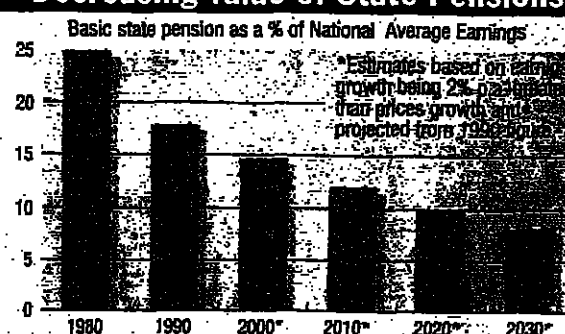
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Should I stay or should I go?

Age related National Insurance rebates



Decreasing value of State Pensions



Opting-out: Nic Cicutti looks at what the new rules will mean

The next few months will require an important decision by personal pension holders - whether new rebates paid if they opt out, or stay opted out, of the state earnings-related pension scheme make it worthwhile for them to do so. When it was introduced by Barbara Castle in 1978, the aim was for Serps, together with the basic state pension, to contribute up to 45 per cent of an average salary before retirement. But within two years of the Conservatives taking office in 1979, the real value of Serps has been gradually cut back, so that by 2030 it will only be worth a small portion of its present value.

From 1988, to encourage more people to abandon Serps, which the Government considered a burden, it allowed individual employees to replace, or "contract out", of Serps. In exchange for doing so, part of their own and their employers' National Insurance contributions were rebated back into a personal pension. The employee's own rebate

also received basic tax relief, increasing its value. Most occupational pension schemes give employees the choice of opting out or remaining in Serps.

The rebate, paid by the Department of Social Security, was 5.37 per cent of so-called "upper tier" earnings, which stood last year between £1.172 and £23.660. Those over 30 receive an extra 1 per cent. A 35-year-old earning £20,000 would receive £1,077 from the DSS into a pension plan.

The decision to opt out of Serps depended on the period of time before retirement, within which the rebate had time to grow as an investment. Generally, the older a person the less beneficial opting out was, because they stood to gain little or even lose out the closer they were to retirement.

Many financial advisers would recommend that their clients opt out of Serps until they reached a "pivotal age", when they should rejoin and reap the benefits of both systems. The age was usually between 35 and 40 for men and 30 to 35 for women.

The DSS has acted to replace flat-rate rebates with age-related ones, with younger people receiving less. For example, a 16-year-old will receive a rebate worth 3.88 per cent of upper tier earnings, while those aged 46 or over will receive 9.48 per cent.

The same 35-year-old earning £20,000 would get £835 in the 1997-98 tax year, increasing in subsequent years to reach £1,590. The Government argues that the new system is fairer to people of all ages and more closely reflects the benefits of opting out of Serps.

In fact, it makes it more likely that people who have previously not found it worthwhile will now seriously consider opting out - thus removing themselves as "burdens" on the state. Indeed experts now believe pivotal ages have moved upwards, 50 to 55 for men and 43-47 for women.

So, should you opt out of Serps? Pension companies argue that doing so gives you more control over your money; men can choose to retire at 60, unlike Serps: they have a greater

say in how benefits are paid to beneficiaries if they die before retirement; and they can decide on their fund's investment strategy. There is also the possibility of a bigger fund than Serps at retirement if investments grow substantially.

However, you should also remember that personal pensions involve a gamble. In this case, the size of the rebate is based on a complicated combination of assumptions by the Government actuary's department about inflation, how much salaries will rise above the prices index, what interest rates will be when a pension is paid and what management charges are levied on the pension fund.

If the assumptions are right, those who opt out will do well. If they are wrong, those who left the comfort of Serps for the thrill of an opted out pension will be wrong. It pays to discuss the issue in detail with an independent financial adviser (IFA).

For details of an IFA near you, call 0117 972 3333

مكتبة من الامارات

Top-up: Zoe Sinclair could use PEPs to augment her pension payments, which are already close to the maximum allowable

PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE PEAKE

Makeover: Zoe and Martin are NHS clinicians who are in a reasonably good position to think about retirement

NAMES: Zoe Sinclair and husband Martin
AGES: 47 and 61
OCCUPATIONS: NHS clinicians
PROBLEM: Zoe earns £26,000 working for a health trust in Wales, while her husband earns £31,000. They have a small mortgage, backed by a Scottish Amicable endowment policy taken out in 1987. The couple have a range of savings and investments, including Tessa and PEPs with Barclays, UK Government stock and a small number of BT shares. Most of their investments are aimed at the longer term.

Martin aims to retire within the next few years, Zoe at 61. They aim to maintain as far as possible their current lifestyles after retirement and have both paid significant pension top-up contributions into separate Free-Standing Additional Voluntary Contribution schemes (FSAVCs).

THE ADVISER: Philippa Gee, of Gee & Company, a fee-based financial planning practice in Shrewsbury, Shropshire (01743 236982).

THE ADVICE: "Our calculations show that Zoe could receive an income (including benefits from past and present occupational schemes, FSAVC arrangement and state pension entitlement) equal to 61 per cent of her final salary, plus a tax-free cash sum of £41,000, at her chosen retirement date.

An important point is that both her and Martin's occupational pension schemes participate in the public sector "Transfer Club" which can offer good terms for those transferring their entitlements from one job to another.

Our calculations indicate that, if allowed, transferring Zoe's credits from other public sector schemes into the NHS one would be financially beneficial, particularly as benefits in the previous scheme are linked to the salary at the date she stopped working.

By transferring her benefits, they will instead be linked to Zoe's present salary, which has risen faster than inflation.

Zoe has little scope to increase pension contributions as they are already close to the maximum allowable of 15 per cent and as a result the required income would need to be provided via a separate investment.

Ideally this would be in the form of a PEP, which could also be used to shelter from tax shares she is due to receive over the next few months from the Halifax.

Martin plans to retire sooner. We estimate he could receive an income (including benefits from the NHS, Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), FSAVC and basic state pension) of approximately 71 per cent of final salary, plus a cash sum of around £55,000. While the USS also participates in the Transfer Club, our calculations indicate that in his circumstances it would be better to leave matters as they are.



Healthy future

contributing for over four years. Both Prudential and Scottish Amicable are large, financially strong companies and therefore should be well placed to achieve satisfactory future returns.

On a more general basis, I would make the following observations. Martin owns another property which will shortly be rented out for £360 per month. The property is currently held in Martin's name only. Given that he suffers higher rate tax and is likely to continue to do so for the time being, it may be appropriate to consider moving the house into Zoe's name, as a basic rate taxpayer.

He has assets of which two-thirds are invested in UK equities, about 8 per cent invested overseas, the majority of which in Europe, and the remainder in fixed interest stocks.

Clearly by using only one investment company his choice of funds has been extremely limited (for example, the Japan fund has been particularly weak compared to that of its peer group). Also, the fixed-interest exposure is quite high for someone happy to take a medium/higher risk approach. Geographically, South-east Asia is not represented and in a long term growth portfolio there ought to be some exposure to those markets.

Zoe and Martin are currently saving £400 each month, and the rental income will be in addition to this. I would suggest they build up cash savings for any unforeseen requirements. Their Barclays account pays a low

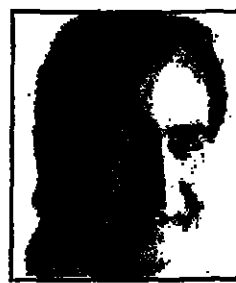
interest rate of 2.3 per cent gross. A more competitive account should be used, for example the C&G, currently offering 6 per cent gross.

Once this has been set up they should look to maximise investments which provide tax free benefits. Therefore Martin should begin a Tessa and both should look to concentrate on building up PEP holdings. Not only will this give further equity exposure and tax free growth, but will be an excellent method of increasing retirement income in the future, free of tax.

The mortgage is held in joint names, yet the endowment policy is in Zoe's name only. To incorporate Martin into the policy at normal rates would cost an extra £28.40 per month. Alternatively, we would suggest that a portion of Martin's tax-free cash sum at retirement is used to repay the mortgage, thus saving total interest costs of more than £15,000. The endowment policy should be retained to boost retirement funds, with current illustrations giving a projected maturity value of £24,600 assuming an annual rate of return of 5 per cent and £33,200 at 10 per cent.

Martin has not yet made a will and this needs to be put in place urgently – if he were to die now, his estate would be dealt with under intestacy law, not as he would wish.

THE VERDICT: "We are extremely pleased with the advice, which seems very clear. Philippa is on the ball and we intend to start implementing things straight away."



Nic Cicuti

Not for the first time and, I suspect, not for the last either, the personal

pensions watchdog issued figures this week showing that the process of paying compensation to hundreds of thousands of victims of the mis-selling scandal is proceeding painfully slowly.

Readers of this column will excuse, I hope, another rant. The fact is that the Personal Investment Authority, the regulator tasked with settling the matter quickly, has failed miserably in its job.

Almost every major policy initiative, including the Government's decision to "name and shame" insurers which delay compensating their clients, has been forced on recalcitrant PIA members, initially against PIA advice.

While the latest efforts by the Government to speed things up are to be welcomed, an internal report leaked this week to *The Independent* about one

We are talking about sabotage of the pension compensation process

company, Britannic, makes chilling reading.

Investigators who looked at Britannic's records discovered a shambolic approach to dealing with the pensions compensation review, including massive inefficiency.

Random samples of the company's files found significant numbers of policyholders applying for their pensions to be reviewed were being turned down without a proper reason being given. Worse, some callers were told not even to bother applying to have their pensions checked for evidence of mis-selling.

There is little doubt that what was happening at Britannic is also taking place at a number of leading insurance companies. If so, we are talking not just about ineffectiveness but sabotage of the compensation process for tens of thousands of policyholders.

Some time ago, a senior insurance executive told me that, despite suggestions that

his industry wanted to resolve the problem, the reverse was true. After all, no matter how good the industry as a whole might be at cleaning the problem up, there would always be someone there to tarnish the others. So why not stall too? It might mean more bad publicity, but compared with saving your company £20m or £30m in compensation costs, a few critical headlines were an acceptable price to pay.

Ultimately, it will be down to you, the readers, and those of us in the media who have pushed and campaigned for full compensation for victims of the scandal, to ensure that people are not let down.

This week we publish an important story about repayment mortgages (page 24). It seems most lenders are using a system of calculating the amounts repaid and still owed which hugely increases the total cost of buying a home. On a £50,000 loan over 25 years, the over-payment can come to at least £13,000.

Lenders defend their charging structure by claiming that everyone knows they do this. Let's put it to the test. If you knew about their charging system, and that other lenders apply a far fairer approach, and you are perfectly happy to pay over the odds, please write and tell me. If not, get ready to switch mortgages to a better lender.

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John Whiting is a tax partner at Price Waterhouse



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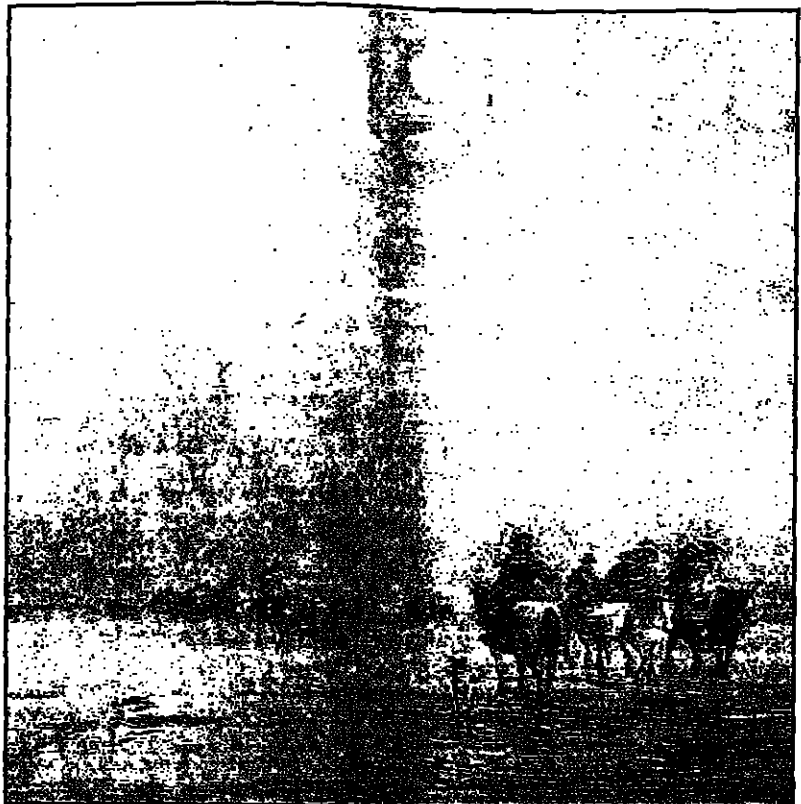
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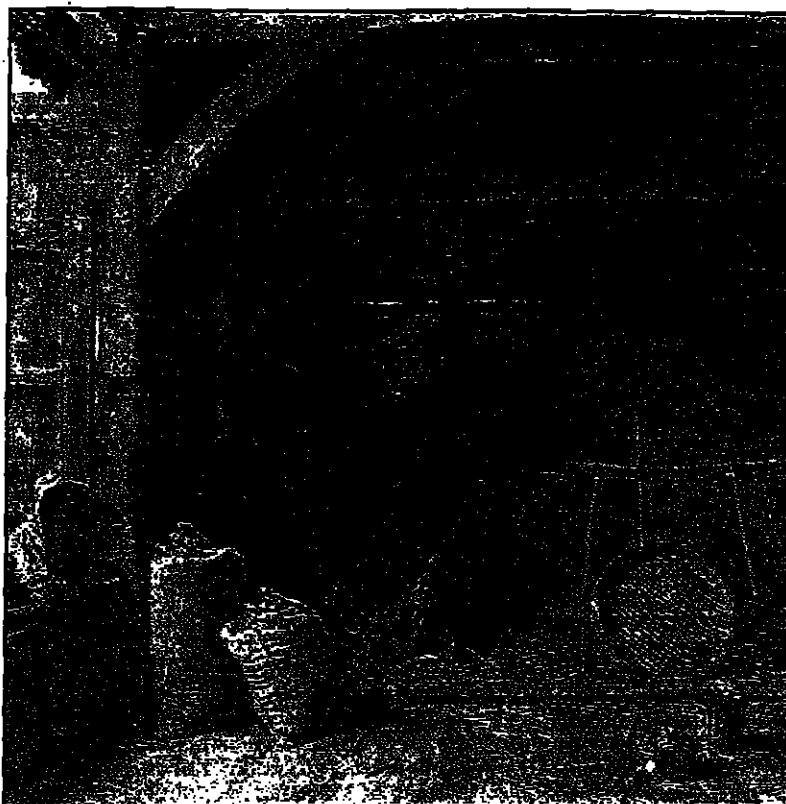
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مذكرات من الاصل



Breaking records: English watercolours by David Cox (left) and William Henry Hunt



Fighting over a rural idyll

Early English watercolours are not the sexiest sector of the art market. Until recently, they were more likely to be seen decorating the study walls of retired doctors and clergymen than the jazzy interiors of young City whizz-kids.

But spectacular record prices at last month's spring sales at Sotheby's and Christie's in London have recalled the eager buying of 10 years ago and prompted speculation that prices for gentle rural idylls of the 18th and 19th centuries might be about to take off.

Two saleroom duels caused the sensation, both at Sotheby's. The London dealers Hazlitt Gooden and Fox paid £109,300 for a watercolour by David Cox (1783-1859) showing one of his favourite subjects – travellers, some on horseback, hurrying across Lancaster Sands just ahead of the treacherous tide. The biggest price previously paid for a Cox was £49,500.

But the talking point in New Bond Street was not just Hazlitt Gooden and Fox's bullish bid but the fact that their bidding was aggressively chased sky-high by a brash newcomer on a first outing – the London dealership Spink-Leger. They are a marriage of two galleries that took place only last

Collect to invest: John Windsor on saleroom duels for watercolours

September, with a big but undisclosed buying kitty from Christie's, which owns them.

Spink-Leger carried off "The Interior of a Barn", an enchanting and technically brilliant study in light and shadow by William Henry Hunt (1790-1864). Of course, said wisecracks, the big bid would obviously have been on the instruction of a rich collector.

But the irrepressible and unrepentant Lowell Libson of Spink Leger, a watercolour specialist who used to be with the Leger Galleries, denied this: "I always buy for stock, never on commission – it shows I'm convinced enough to put my money where my hunch is, and that gives clients confidence. People have been telling me for 15 years that I pay crazy prices. But, luckily, resources here are not a problem. I don't get bored with a very good picture on my office wall."

The market, he says, is solid at the top. As a market-maker, he should know. "The rich are always with us", is a favourite quip of his – but what of the rest of us with

only a few hundred or a few thousand to spend? "The middle-market – that is, between £3,000 and £20,000 – is a UK-based market and is more sensitive to economic downturns."

UK-based? It's a good clue. He means not just retired English clergymen but people in the professions and finance who would like to buy two or three watercolours a year but will stop buying in an ill wind.

He was off to a fair in New York when I spoke to him: another clue. Those Americans may know their Turners (an American private collector paid the top price of £133,500 at Christie's watercolour sale last month, for a Turner landscape) as well as much-hyped French watercolourists such as Boudin, but when are they going to take a fancy to less famous English names such as Cox and Hunt?

It's happening, according to Libson. British scholars have been busy researching and publishing on English watercolourists for the past 15-20 years, especially English landscape painters. Before long,

rich Americans will have all the information they need.

Libson finds little to inspire him in the middle price range these days. But his catalogue of best choices offers for £4,000 a delightful Edward Lear (yes, the much-loved nonsense man) showing the two sons of Walter Congreve, his neighbour in San Remo, playing with their dog.

Sotheby's auctioneer Henry Wemyss explains that, 10 years ago, there would be half a dozen big dealers buying for stock 15-30 watercolours in every sale. Now, there are fewer dealers and they buy only two or three paintings at the top of the market. The reason: clued-up private collectors are competing with them in the middle price range.

Ten years ago, a nice riverside scene by John Varley (1778-1842), a friend of William Blake and Cox's teacher, might be snapped up by a dealer for £1,500 and end up with a tag of £2,500 in his shop window. Not any more. Private buyers are prepared to bid that kind of money at auction.

But private collectors have become more discriminating, as well as bolder at auction. They want good examples of the school and good examples of the artist's work.

Quality counts. If you have no eye for it, spend your money elsewhere.

What is more, the new private buyers think like dealers: they want not only good subject matter and good condition but pictures fresh to market.

Hazlitt's Lindsay Stainton, who was not saying whether her big buy was for stock or for a client, cautioned: "I don't know whether prices at the top end of the market will percolate down. Hitherto, this kind of art has been predominantly domestic consumption. But I think that watercolourists such as Cox could have the same appeal as, say, Gustave Courbet (French realist, 1819-77). Collectors abroad are beginning to realise that the English produced great painters, not just great writers."

A dealer who has succeeded in the middle market as well as the top is Andrew Wyld of the London dealers Thomas Agnew. "My selling exhibition in February-March was deliberately middle-market, £2,000-£25,000, and they were selling as thick and fast as in 1988-89. Not all of them are rich. Some have only £1,000-£1,500 to spend. I take the same trouble in advising them as I do in buying for myself. That's how a dealer can come in useful."

Even if the US market needs a breathing space, a downward slide may not be imminent



Brian Tora

Corporate finance departments have been kept busy over the past year or so. Much of the activity was put down to a "beat the election" buying spree from corporate predators. The idea was to get in early and so be ahead of what was expected to be a tougher regulatory regime under a Labour Government. So far so good, but what happens as soon as the election is out of the way? A mega-merger catches the market unawares.

I imagine there is merit in washing down your Burger King meal with pints of the black stuff, but it is difficult to see the deal going through. Aside from the fact that it will be a great test for the new Government's competition policy, already many of Grand Metropolitan and Guinness's rivals in the drinks trade have pointed to the anti-trust provisions in the US and have indicated that they will make every effort to stop the merger succeeding.

That says to me it must be a good idea for the shareholders of the two companies. The market thought so too, marking the shares of both companies up sharply. Now we have the waiting.

It is very telling that the new company is to be called GMG Brands, assuming it succeeds in crossing the many hurdles that will be in its path. Brands and brand management look like being the business opportunity of the 1990s.

Banks have been working hard to develop their brands. Witness the way that the Midland Griffin has been replaced by the HSBC Hexagon. HSBC probably thinks its business skills and branding capabilities are capable of further exploitation. Rumours abounded during the week that it was about to pounce upon Abbey National.

It is just as well we have all this takeover activity to buoy market sentiment as I have been listening to the wise Professor Tim Congdon telling an audience in Ipswich that the bull market has come to an end. Speaking at a seminar organised by my new colleagues in my home county (hurray! an early night), the ex-adviser to the Chancellor pointed to inflated

valuation levels in the US leading inevitably to a retrenchment, with all the knock-on effect that might have on other world markets.

I hope he is not right, but we have to accept that valuation levels are as stretched as they have ever been during my three decades in the investment business. There are, though, reasons to believe that, even if the market needs a breathing space, a downward slide is not imminent.

At the meeting of our own investment strategy committee this week, my colleague charged with keeping the temperature of the US market under review pointed to the fact that there were still more bears than bulls amongst US investors. Moreover, he could point to the fact that the Fed had the economy closely under control, that technological advance was delivering higher profitability without forcing up wage rates and impacting upon inflation and that profit performance was consistently coming in ahead of analysts' expectations.

The most potent factor, in his view, is this preponderance of bears. He surmised that investment managers only tell you how they feel about the market after they have done whatever dealing is necessary to ensure they are ahead of the game, for fear of not being able to buck a trend they themselves may have kicked into being.

In other words, managers are bearish because they still have a lot of liquidity to put into the market. They want to see the market lower. This seems largely borne out by the evidence. Take the way in which Wall Street bounces so swiftly after a setback.

All this may not be a reason to believe the US market can go on breaking into new high ground consistently, but it does give comfort when trying to assess the scale of any setback. And since the US market will govern to a greater or lesser extent how we all do, I find that a very comforting thought.

Brian Tora is chairman of the Greig Middleton strategy committee and can be reached on 0171 392 4000

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TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON TV, WHERE TO GO AND WHEN, READ TODAY'S **eye**Serena Mackesy
In my week

But the most striking thing is this: beautiful people en masse have roughly the same effect as a bottle of aspirin – totally anodyne

Stylist has long since dropped out: a pair of doe-like eyes is not a strong hand to hold. Designer, photographer and I hunch aggressively over the formica, fighting to the bitter end. "See you one and raise you one." We study our cards. They're large: not so easy to manipulate, but the detail is fantastic. "What've you got?" "A three of little pointy chins." "You?" "Yeah. See that two, raise three." "I'll see you." Photographer pouts, shrugs. Lays his cards on the table. "A flush." "What of it?" "But-ton noses." Triumphantly I lay mine down. "Five-card straight. Cups AA through D." "Damn."

Model-card stud is a tough game: you have to be ruthless and you have to have total self-belief to get to the top. The rules aren't clear-cut like they are in other games: sure, you've got your basic traditions of ascendancy – and luck, of course, plays a major part, but so, unlike modelling, does originality. You've got to be able to see those special features and use them: in model-card poker, it's differences that count: a pair of roman noses, for instance, will beat a flush of rosebud lips hands down.

Designer, stylist and photographer have been working: I've just been along for the ride. We've spent the day cabbing from agency to agency, developing coffee-imbalances and extra-large yawns as a stream of kids is herded past us hoping to be picked for the slaughter. Sometimes they're in books, sometimes they're on walls. And in the wood-floored, white-walled atmosphere of the Elite agency, they've been trotted out in the flesh (what there is of it) to tell us their names in their little voices and look hopeful beneath the layers of panstick masking their beautiful complexions.

There's nothing like a model agency to give you an appetite

for a sausage sandwich. It's not so much the girls themselves as the bookers, with their salad-and-grape-pitta-bread lunches and their adjectival armaments. Bookers have sharp haircuts, sharp faces and totally angular personalities. The words "amazing", "extraordinary", "wonderful", "so professional" and "such a character" trip from their tongues as they wave photographs of indistinguishable pubescents under your nose.

"She's fantastic," warble the bookers as we huddle over a glossy of another child who should by rights have been playing hopscotch and bothering old blokes with the way she

you like it in London?" photographer asks an exhausted-looking Swede. "Oh, yes," she replies. "I hope to live here one day. Find a good Englishman and settle down."

You learn a lot about beauty when you're confronted with a whole slew of it. Those cheekbones that bulge out above an inverted isosceles trench, for instance. You know how you get that look? By having teeth like a horse, that's how. Wrinkleless skin is usually accompanied by a total lack of movement in the facial muscles. But the most striking thing is this: beautiful people, en masse, have roughly the same effect as a bottle of aspirin – totally anodyne. Ikea may claim we've come a long way, but your average rag-trade impresario doesn't want a woman to look interesting enough to distract the eye from their clothes, and the ideal female body is still one that doesn't traumatise the male of the species with the fact that it menstruates.

We gather handfuls of cardboard and dive into the first bag-joint we come across. Order white-bread sandwiches with loads of ketchup, Coke (diet) and an ashtray. Designer and stylist bitch about the day, laying cards out one by one. "That one," says stylist. "I mean, the teeth. Dentistry's free on the NHS for kids, isn't it?" "Have you seen the arms on this one? She'd never pass quality control at Asda."

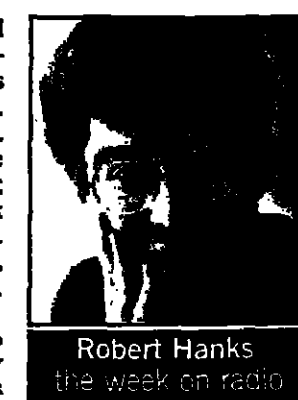
"You're really good at talking to them," stylist says to photographer, who has been food-poisoned by the three bottles of wine he shared with me the night before and has been grizzling all morning. "Yerr, well," he replies round a mouthful of food. "I like to see if their expressions can change." I fondly finger the spot that's coming up on my chin. "Anybody fancy a game of stud?" "Okay," says stylist. "Brunettes are trumps, yeah?"

Giving Proust the Pinter treatment

"Yellow screen. (A bell rings.) Open countryside, a line of trees seen from a railway carriage. The train is still. No sound. Momentary yellow screen. The sea, seen from a high window; a towel hanging on a towel-rack in foreground. No sound. Venice. A window on a palazzo, seen from a gondola. No sound. Momentary yellow screen."

If anybody ever got round to filming *The Proust Screenplay* (Radio 3, Sun), Harold Pinter's celebrated adaptation of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, this is how it would start: with a series of images moving past at a thoughtful, sedate pace. On radio, in Ned Chailier's production, it started very differently. True, you got the same images, spoken (by Pinter himself) without noticeable haste; but without all the help that the pictures give you, the effect was of a cloudburst of ideas, a brainstorm. And here's me, never having read any Proust, caught without my umbrella.

In this hetero-sketch soap-opera, personality, places, images whipping past for more

Robert Hanks
the week on radio

than two hours, you couldn't help feeling that you were getting the worst of all worlds: you lost the leisure for contemplation that books allow; and the sense of having a story served up for you that film offers. Instead, you had to concentrate unrelentingly.

This probably didn't serve Proust well – though to some extent, this mattered less than how Proust was being made to serve Pinter. Quite long stretches of conversation here could easily be slotted into (say) Pinter's screenplay for *The*

Quiller Memorandum, an enigmatic spy film involving neo-Nazis in Cold War Berlin: with Pinter there is always a subtext, a sense of important knowledge never discussed aloud; and the fact of the unspoken dialogue often seems more important to Pinter than the content of it.

But even Harold didn't come out of it that well. Given the verbal density necessary to convey so much plot (12 volumes, a man's entire life), there wasn't much room for the Pinter pause. When it came, it should have been a silence weighty with significance, a place for all that unspoken knowledge to gather; instead, it felt like a simple pause for breath.

What all this comes down to is that *The Proust Screenplay* on radio left you little the wiser about what *The Proust Screenplay* might have been like on screen. As radio, while it was hard to follow, it was also gripping. One reason was Pinter's own narration, which was the best piece of acting by him I've come across – holding the action together, giving a sense of unity to the tricky chronol-

ogy. A fine performance, too, from John Wood, as Charlus, an elderly aristocrat with a taste for the lash. Douglas Hodge's Marcel, our sensitive hero, made comparatively little impression; but that's probably what he was there for.

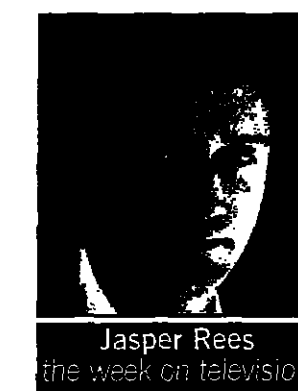
The effects of memory were explored in less depth in the first part of Murray Walker's *Grand Prix World* (Radio 5, Tues), in which the great man interviewed a number of drivers, past and present, and asked them all the same, somewhat leading question: wasn't it all much nicer in the old days? There are actually some Pinterish resonances in Walker's speech – you can imagine him in one of his friskier moments coming up with a phrase like "A man the like of whom there'd been no one before and none since", which is how Walker introduced Jackie Stewart. The big difference is that nobody has ever accused Walker of knowing how to do a significant pause. It's not often sport and commentary are so perfectly suited; what will happen to grand prix without him?

Dinner for two (or more) chez Wax

I didn't take long for the BBC to come back with a riposte to *The Jack Docherty Show* (CS, every weekday). No surprise, then, that Ruby (BBC2, Mon to Wed) doesn't feel fully thought through: it's an experimental stop-gap. But – hats off – it doesn't skimp on ambition. Uniting guests round a dining table with no particular axe to grind or product to promote, the challenge accepted by Ruby is to keep the conversational ball up in the air without the support system of topicality, and without the flabby or ill-disciplined as an equivalent show on radio could get away with.

One of its charms is precisely its want of slickness, its unscripted – as opposed to laboriously choreographed – informality. On one night, Marianne Faithfull left the set to remove a layer of clothing, while Wax disappeared to the powder room – and, true to form, told everyone about it afterwards. That left Lucinda Lambton and Will Self à deux at the table, nervously (and, it has to be said, pointlessly) chatting about the indolent hero in Russian literature.

There have been late-night round-table shows before, but none have attempted to impose the grammar of the chat show, which is principally designed to pry into the lives

Jasper Rees
the week on television

of the famous. Even after three installments, it's clear that some nights go off better than others. This is the most salient difference from Docherty's shows, which tend not to oscillate away from a nightly plateau of likeable competence. On Monday the chat on Ruby was of comedy, on Tuesday of war reportage, on Wednesday of drug culture. Over the same three nights, despite the pot-pourri of guests, *The Jack Docherty Show* revisited its usual conversational tropes: "I'll be at the Edinburgh Festival this summer" or "I used to binge for Britain" at the Edinburgh Festival. It might be worth making a virtue of the guest list's repetitiveness, by lumping on to

one thematised show all the Perrier award-winners, or grouping three old-timers fresh out of rehab on one sofa. Except that that would be copying Ruby.

On Ruby, guests can measure their status by the number of other names on the bill. There were loads of minor Euro-comedians in on the Monday but on Tuesday there were only John Simpson and Eve Arnold to field searching questions from Wax like, "Who's the worst tyrant you've ever worked with?" To which you wanted to reply, "Define with."

The war reporters' show was rewarding, if short on gossip. Arnold unpacked her Marilyn Monroe anecdotes from their museum display case. Simpson merely teetered on the edge of indifference with a story about Kate Adie's "highly emotional" reports from Tiananmen Square. Marianne Faithfull, on Wednesday, was altogether more frank. There seems to be agreement between Ruby and Docherty to get the word "fuck" on air as often as possible, but Ruby had a head start because Faithfull was fondly recalling the joys of sex with the Rolling Stones. Wax was all set to join in; her pelt-mell teeth had already formulated the first consonant of the F-word: but she opted at the last minute for the phrase

"screwed by Mick Jagger". For perhaps the first time ever on television, she sounded chicken.

"I hope we're not going to spend this interview talking about flowers," said Ann Widdecombe to Jeremy Paxman on Newsnight (BBC2, Tues). Like Marianne Faithfull, Widdecombe was educated in a convent. You'd think the similarity would end there, but no, both have also faced allegations concerning chocolate. Paxman asked the former minister all about it. Of course, she denied everything.

He then turned to Howard, who would have given his eye-teeth to do an interview on a floral theme. If ever someone wanted to say "fuck" on television, in conjunction with the words "this for a game of soldiers", it was the man whose chances of becoming the next Tory leader were nuked by his single television appearance. Firing bullets at the candidate's dancing feet, Paxman wore his why-do-I-bother? face. Thank God he does. The Tory party is imploding not, as has been suggested, like Labour in 1979, but like the Nazis at Nuremberg. Which is why *Newsnight*, with its crack team of cross-examiners, currently provides by far the most thrilling late-night entertainment.

DAMIAN HURTS......and his painfully creative struggle

Neil Kerber

DAMIAN, AS YOUR AGENT, I MUST TELL YOU THAT I DON'T THINK THE SHOW'S GOING VERY WELL. PEOPLE SEEM REPULSED BY SOME OF YOUR WORK.

MMM YOU KNOW, DAMIAN, IT'S A TOUGH OLD WORLD OUT THERE. SURVIVING ISN'T ALWAYS EASY!

IT'S DOG EAT DOG!

YOU'LL HAVE TO SCRAP IT. IT'S MAKING PEOPLE FEEL SICK!

Whatever happened to?

The Thames Flood Barrier

The Big Splash:

On 8 May 1984, Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by Ken Livingstone, then Labour leader of the GLC, opens the £500m Thames Flood Barrier at Woolwich Reach. Meteorological forecasts warn the Barrier's operators of tidal surges and the gates rise from the river bed to stem any encroaching flood. The Barrier's 65 staff have defended London on 30 occasions.

Murkier Waters:

A political squall broke at the opening. The doomed GLC could not stem the tide of Thatcherism. However, King Ken disrupted the smooth Tory flow by craftily persuading the Queen to preside over a spectacular opening ceremony.

Drowning not waving:

Though Ben Jonson pitied "the poor

banksider creature", it was not until 300 years on that the true cost of flooding was appreciated – 1.25 million people and 45 square miles of the Thames estuary were under threat. Nevertheless, it took until 1975 before construction began on the Barrier. Meanwhile, according to Whitehall's contingency plan, Parliament was to hoist her skirts and sit in Kingsway's Connaught Rooms. Eventually, the project finished two years late in 1982 and 100 per cent over budget.

Ripples of consequence:

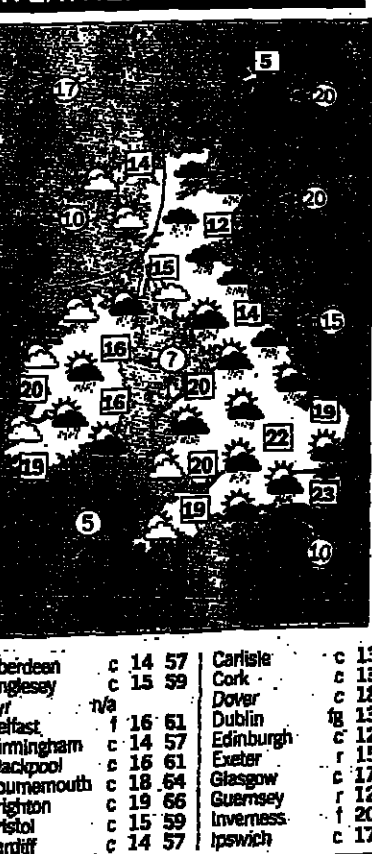
The Barrier has saved London from a £10bn bill 10 times. However, a 1990 report claimed that global warming and rising sea levels would swamp it. Thames Water stated nervously: "We shall have to produce a plan within five to 10 years to heighten the barrier if the present scientific evidence is confirmed." The Barrier wasn't as "foolproof" as *The Times* had once commented.

Upstream:

Though the Barrier manager, David Wilkes, dismisses dramatic global warming scenarios, he's "waiting for the big one" – last October brought the highest tides since 1968. As we pack away our hose-pipes for the summer, it seems that the deluge will only come with the very disaster the Barrier hopes to prevent: "The big one."

Mike Higgins

WEATHER

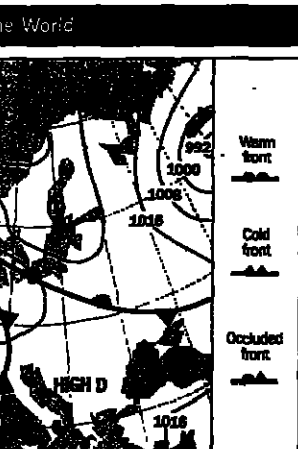


General Situation and Outlook:

England and Wales will start mostly grey with some residual showers. Away from the north-east coast it should become bright and warm for a time with some hazy sunshine, but more showers are expected to develop, some very heavy and thundery. Scotland will start with showery bursts of quite heavy rain. Northern and eastern Scotland will probably stay dull and cool, but western Scotland should brighten up. Northern Ireland will have sunny spells, but showers will develop. Scotland will have thundery rain tomorrow, but the south should become brighter. Northern Ireland, Wales and western England will have light showers, but thundery downpours are possible in central and eastern England. Early next week the showers in the north should slowly clear with good sunny spells developing in the west by Tuesday, but it will be cool and cloudy in the east. Southern Britain should have a lot of dry weather on Monday, but rain is expected on Tuesday.

World Weather Yesterday, Midday (GMT): c: cloudy; f: fog; h: heavy; m: mist; dr: drizzle; s: snow; sun: sunny; th: thunder; previous day's figure at local time.

Athens	c 24 75	Dhahran	f 37 99	Moscow	f 26 79
Auckland	c 15 59	Florence	f 30 86	New York	c 22 72
Bahia	c 20 68	Frankfurt	f 25 77	Nice	c 21 70
Bangkok	c 37 99	Geneva	c 24 75	Niagara	c 25 77
Barcelona	f 21 70	Gibraltar	f 17 63	Paris	c 27 81
Belgrade	c 31 88	Helsinki	c 14 57	Prague	c 27 81
Berlin	f 29 84	Hong Kong	c 32 90	Reykjavik	f 7 45
Bombay	c 32 90	Istanbul	c 16 61	Rio de Jan	c 23 73
Brussels	c 24 75	Jerusalem	c 29 84	Riyadh	f 36 97
Budapest	f 28 82	Khartoum	c 31 91	Rome	f 26 79
Cairo	f 33 91	Kuala Lumpur	c 29 84	Stockholm	c 18 64
Cape Town	c 22 72	Lisbon	c 17 63	Sydney	f 15 59
Casablanca	c 18 64	Los Angeles	c 18 64	Taipei	f 22 72
Chennai	c 31 88	Madrid	c 22 72	Tokyo	c 27 81
Copenhagen	c 17 63	Malaga	c 22 72	Venice	c 27 81
Corfu	f 27 81	Malta	c 22 72	Vienna	c 27 81
Darwin	c 31 88	Melbourne	c 14 57	Warsaw	f 23 73
Delhi	c 37 99	Montreal	c 14 57	Washington	c 25 77
Durban	c 37 99	Moscow	c 17 63	Wellington	c 16 61



AA Roadwatch:

Sunny, M25-J10. Various restrictions and lane closures both ways between Reigate and the A3 as major widening work continues.

Bristol, M5 J18-19. Construction in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a 50mph speed limit. Regular rush hour delays.

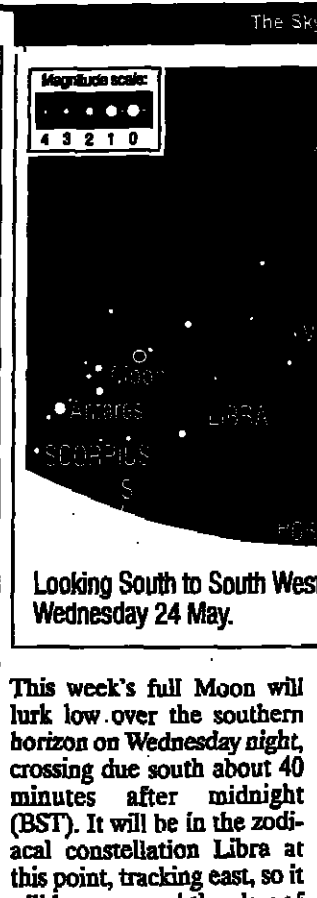
Staffordshire, A50 Stoke-on-Trent. Major construction work at M61. Long peak-time delays.

West Yorkshire, M1 J47. Major long-term roadworks continue around the Leeds junction with lane and speed restrictions. Expect delays on the M1, M62 and Dewsbury Road.

Edinburgh, M9 Newbridge Spur. Major roadworks at Newbridge. Roundabout (M812). Expect delays.

West Midlands, M6 J6. Long-term roadworks – the sliproad from Solihull Cross to the M6 north is closed. Diversions in operation by Lichfield Road (A5127).

Buckinghamshire, M40 J13-14. Long-term roadworks with a contraflow between J14 (M25) and J13 (Wycombe East).



The Sky at Night:

Looking South to South West about midnight (BST) on Wednesday 24 May.

This week's full Moon will lurk low over the southern horizon on Wednesday night, crossing due south about 40 minutes after midnight (BST). It will be in the zodiacal constellation Libra at this point, tracking east, so it will have crossed the claw of the Scorpion before it rises the following day. Sadly, the splendid constellation of Scorpion is never fully visible from the latitudes of the UK. It is definitely worth looking out for if you travel to more southerly climes in the summer. But with the help of the Moon, it should be possible to locate the Scorpion's head and claws, and the brilliant red supergiant star, Antares, which emblazons his upper back. Antares literally means rival of Mars. If you want to compare the ruddy colours of the two for yourself, now is the opportunity. Look further round the horizon towards the west to find Mars, the Red Planet, also rather low in the sky.

Jacqueline Minton

Lighting-up Times

Location	Today	Tomorrow
London	8:49pm to 5:04am	8:50pm to 5:03am
Bristol	8:59pm to 5:14am	9:00pm to 5:13am
Birmingham	9:00pm to 5:15am	9:01pm to 5:14am
Manchester	9:00pm to 5:15am	9:01pm to 5:14am
Newcastle	9:11pm to 5:26am	9:12pm to 5:25am
Glasgow	9:27pm to 5:00am	9:28pm to 5:01am
Belfast	9:26pm to 5:13am	9:27pm to 5:14am

Yesterday's Readings

Location	NO ₂	SO ₂
London	Moderate	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Moderate	Moderate
C. England	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Moderate
N. Ireland	Good	Good

Outlook for Today

Location	NO ₂	SO ₂
London	Moderate	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C. England	Moderate	Good
N. England	Moderate	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

High Tides

Location	AM HT	PM HT
London	10.68 6.0 23.24 5.8	
Liverpool	8.27 7.5 21.03 7.7	
Avonmouth	3.65 10.0 16.36 10.2	
Hull (Albert Dock)	3.26 6.9 15.40 7.1	
Greenock	9.24 2.7 22.37 2.7	
Dun Laoghaire	9.09 3.4 21.41 3.4	

Sun and Moon

Location	Sun rises	Sun sets
London	5:06am	8:49pm
Bristol	5:16am	8:59pm
Birmingham	5:17am	9:00pm
Manchester	5:18am	9:01pm
Newcastle	5:29am	9:12pm
Glasgow	5:45am	9:28pm
Belfast	5:44am	9:27pm

Full Moon

Location	Full Moon
London	May 22

Low Tides

Location	AM LT	PM LT
London	1.68 1.0 13.24 1.8	
Liverpool	1.27 1.5 11.03 1.7	
Avonmouth	3.65 10.0 16.36 10.2	
Hull (Albert Dock)	3.26 6.9 15.40 7.1	
Greenock	9.24 2.7 22.37 2.7	
Dun Laoghaire	9.09 3.4 21.41 3.4	

TODAY'S TELEVISION

Gerard Gilbert recommends **Wokenwell** Sun 8pm ITV

The biggest mystery of the week is not whodunnit in *Melissa*, but why the BBC have been sending out preview cassettes of *Plotlands* (Sun BBC1) that consist of only 10 minutes of edited highlights. This sort of thing is all well and good when you're trying to settle a cinema audience between the main feature and the main feature, but are next to useless for a previewer's purposes. The more cynically-minded might even suspect dirty press-office tricks in an attempt to palm off a dud. Word of mouth, however, has it that *Plotlands* is rather good.

Written by Jeremy Brock, co-creator of *Casualty* (always a good one for the CV, that), this six-part drama series is set in 1922, when a shyster landowner sold off plots of land at £5 each to Londoners desperate for a new life after the Great War. Our first taker is an Eastender (Saskia Reeves dressing down)

escaping with her young brood from an abusive marriage. And that's about it, really, unless you want me to regurgitate 10 minutes of highlights. Let's just say that love, fire and raw potatoes feature.

I see that the Log Lady makes her first appearance in Channel 5's resuscitation of *Twins Peaks* (Sun C5), and one can chart a genealogical line from David Lynch's seminal drama, through *Northern Exposure* and *Hamish Macbeth* to *Wokenwell* (Sun ITV). Indeed, this looks suspiciously like ITV's answer to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The theme music involves a harmonica, which tells you that it is set somewhere between the Pennines and the North Yorkshire Moors, and you've got to admire how directly writer Bill Gallagher gets stuck into the plot. No time-some character building here - if action reveals character, then why not just get on with it?

The main protagonists are three small-town policemen, led by Ian McElhinney and his fantastic face (imagine a grizzled David Caruso) and their first case involves a butcher, his rival in love and a severed finger. The script has attracted a beefy support cast, including Siobhan Redmond, Celia Imrie, Nicola Stephenson (she was the nanny on the other end of Beth Jordache's celebrated lesbian kiss in *Brookside*) and Lesley Dunlop. It is largely deserved.

McElhinney (Sat and Sun, C4) dramatises the longest libel trial in legal history (313 days - judgement still to come) in which the eco-friendly manufacturers of nutritious hamburgers sued two environmental campaigners who had distributed leaflets criticising it. Bearing in mind that one newspaper hired a libel lawyer to review a recent book about this trial, I think I should just leave it at that. Sheena McDonald - no relation

- acts the part of chorus to the courtroom reconstructions. I wasn't particularly looking forward to *Stonewall* (Sat BBC2), Nigel Finch's dramatisation of the 1969 Stonewall riots - an event (clients in a Greenwich Village gay bar turn on raiding police officers) commonly seen as marking the birthpangs of the gay-rights movement. The 1984 documentary, *Before Stonewall*, covered this ground so well that a dramatisation seemed on the superfluous side. However, Finch, who died of AIDS during editing, has fashioned something mildly compelling out of the material. The basic plot - straight-acting hick arrives in Manhattan and is shown the ropes by a drag queen - owes something to *Midnight Cowboy*. It's Not Unusual (Sun BBC2) meanwhile, tells the story of gay life in Britain since 1918: the first part (of three) covers the inter-war years when public awareness of homosexuality barely existed.

BBC 1

7.00 *Children's BBC*: Harry and the Hendersons. 7.25 News. 7.30 *Falk the Cat*. 7.45 *Babar*. 8.10 *Albert the 5th Musketeer*. 8.35 *The Flintstones*. 9.00 *Phantom 2040*. 9.20 *The Incredible Hulk*. 9.45 *Grange Hill*. 10.10 *Sweet Valley High*. 10.35 *The Ozone*. 10.55 *Weather*. 11.00 *FA Cup Final Grandstand*: 11.05 Team News. 11.20 Top of the Pops. A vote for the worst ever FA Cup final song (5123746). 11.40 *The Road to Wembley*. Look back at the first three rounds (6416307). 11.50 'Born - Doting the Higgs and Crossing the Ties: Behind the scenes at Middlesex FC (4116301). 12.10 *A-Z of Chelsea* (1916331). 12.25 *Mark Hughes*. Profile of Chelsea's Welsh striker (8181524). 12.30 *Teams Set Out for Wembley* (6406303). 12.40 *The Road to Wembley*. Rounds 4 and 5 (6404327). 12.55 *Voting Reminder* (45807017). 1.00 *News* (75421122). 1.10 *The Foreign Factor*: Zola, Juninho and the rest (7036814). 1.30 *The Road to Wembley*. Quarter Finals and Semi Finals (6651638). 1.45 *Teams on the Pitch* (69784746). 1.55 *Desmond Lynam Meets the Two Managers*. That's Ruud Gullit and Bryan Robson (80054098). 2.15 *Result of the Worst Cup Final Song* (30889369). 2.45 *Abide with Me* (7231940). 3.00 *Kick-Off: Chelsea* versus *Middlesbrough*. Match commentary from John Motson and Trevor Brookling (35191291). 5.20 *News*. 5.30 *Local News*. 5.35 *Tom and Jerry* (877982). 5.45 *Dad's Army* (R/T) (765017). 6.15 *The New Adventures of Superman* (S/T) (492678). 7.00 *Whatever You Want*. Gabby Roslin's guests include three people who want to be extras on *Father Ted*. Are they making any more? (421475). 7.50 *The National Lottery Live*. INOS play live and *Avengers* star Patrick Macnee presses the button (S/T) (636901). 8.10 *Jonathan Creek*. A former slapstick film star is accused of being a local nuclear bunker, with a gun inside his head. But can the verdict be suicide, or is it an ingenious murder? Alan Davies and Caroline Quentin star (S/T) (749253). 9.10 *Castaway* (R/S/T) (214098). 10.00 *The Best of Les Dawson* (53307). 10.30 *News*. 10.50 *Match of the Day*. Highlights of today's FA Cup final (S) (4789369). 12.00 *They Think It's All Over*. Olympic rower Matthew Pinsent and Julian Clary are repeat guests (S) (63708). 12.30 *Top of the Pops* (S/T) (70811). 1.00 *News*. 1.05 *Local News*. 1.10 *Local News*. 1.15 *Local News*. 1.20 *Local News*. 1.25 *Local News*. 1.30 *Local News*. 1.35 *Local News*. 1.40 *Local News*. 1.45 *Local News*. 1.50 *Local News*. 1.55 *Local News*. 2.00 *Local News*. 2.05 *Local News*. 2.10 *Local News*. 2.15 *Local News*. 2.20 *Local News*. 2.25 *Local News*. 2.30 *Local News*. 2.35 *Local News*. 2.40 *Local News*. 2.45 *Local News*. 2.50 *Local News*. 2.55 *Local News*. 3.00 *Local News*. 3.05 *Local News*. 3.10 *Local News*. 3.15 *Local News*. 3.20 *Local News*. 3.25 *Local News*. 3.30 *Local News*. 3.35 *Local News*. 3.40 *Local News*. 3.45 *Local News*. 3.50 *Local News*. 3.55 *Local News*. 4.00 *Local News*. 4.05 *Local News*. 4.10 *Local News*. 4.15 *Local News*. 4.20 *Local News*. 4.25 *Local News*. 4.30 *Local News*. 4.35 *Local News*. 4.40 *Local News*. 4.45 *Local News*. 4.50 *Local 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